

S E R M O N S

A N D

D I S C O U R S E S

O N

P R A C T I C A L S U B J E C T S ;

Never before Printed.

By *ROBERT MOSS*, D.D.
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Honourable *SOCIETY* of *Gray's-Inn*.

Published from the Original at the Request of the
said *SOCIETY*.

V O L. VI.

L O N D O N :

Printed for *A. BETTESWORTH* and *C. HITCH*,
at the *Red Lion* in *Pater-Noster-Row*.

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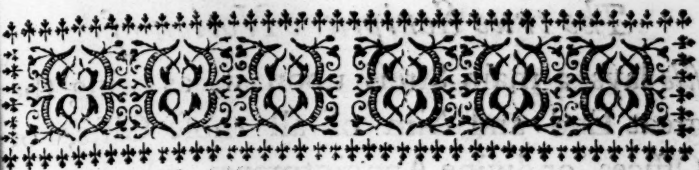
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SER-



S E R M O N . I.

The True Scripture Notion of ED-
FICATION stated and explained.



I COR. XIV. 26. Latter Part.

Let all Things be done to edifying.

THE Word *edifying* here in the Text SERM. I.
is a Word that is very frequently to
be met with in Saint *Paul's* Epistles,
and 'tis often in the Mouths of those that pro-
fess and call themselves *Christians*, and al-
ways a melodious Sound in their Ears: But
I am perswaded, as familiar as People make
with it, 'tis oftner talked of, than well un-
derstood, and much oftner pretended to, than
truly attained.

And yet no doubt 'tis what well deserves
the Consideration and Care of every *Christi-*
an: For, whatever it be, 'tis plain the *Apo-*

The true Scripture Notion of

SERM. I. *He* lays a main Stress upon it, as being the great End and Aim of all those Gifts, or Offices, or divine Appointments, which were either then more especially necessary, or fit to be perpetually settled in the Church. Accordingly we see all along in this Chapter, even amongst miraculous Gifts, those are preferred before the rest that conduce most to this Purpose. (Ver. 1.) *Follow after Charity, and desire spiritual Gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy*: And why is the Preference given to *Prophecy*, which signifies the preaching and confirming the Gospel of Christ, by the apt Interpretation of ancient Prophecies, and such Scriptures as had Reference to the *Messiah*? I say, Why is the Preference given to this Gift, even before that of *Tongues*, but because *HE that prophesyeth* (Ver. 3. and 4.) *speaketh unto Men to Edification, and edifieth the Church*? And therefore he inculcates this Advice upon them again, (Ver. 12.) *Forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual Gifts, since there is this Emulation among you, let it be directed as it ought to be. Seek that ye may excell to the edifying of the Church.*



And

Edification stated and explained.

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And after having noted the Misapplication SERM. I.
and Unprofitableness of any Gift, that is not
contrived for the Use of *edifying*; he lays
it down in the Words of my Text, as the
general Rule for the due Exercise of every
Gift. *How is it then, Brethren? Would ye
know how to proceed in these Cases? When
you come together, every one of you hath a Psalm,
hath a Doctrine, hath a Tongue, hath a Revela-
tion, hath an Interpretation: Let all Things be
done to edifying.* For as he himself tells us,
Chap. xii. Ver. 7. *The Manifestation of the
Spirit is given to every Man to profit withal.*
And therefore this is the best Way, indeed,
the only good Use they could make of those
spiritual Gifts, with which God had endow-
ed them, and the same is the End of the In-
stitution of all those Functions and Offices
which God has appointed in his Church.
For we read *Ephesians* iv. 11, 12. *That he
gave some Apostles, some Prophets, some Evan-
gelists, and some Pastors, and Teachers. To
what Purpose? For the perfecting the Saints,
for the Work of the Ministry, for the edifying
the Body of Christ.*

Upon the whole therefore it appears, that
Edification is the great End and Use of all

God's Gifts and Ordinances; and that not only of those that were extraordinary and peculiar to the first Ages of *Christianity*, but also those that are ordinary and perpetual. For the *Apostles*, *Prophets*, and *Evangelists*, those who first planted, watered, and cultivated the Gospel of Christ, and the *Pastors* and *Teachers*, those who were ordained in a constant Succession to rule and feed his Flock, were all given for the same Purpose.

Edification being therefore a Matter of general Importance to *Christians*, in all Ages, it will concern us to get a right Understanding of it, in order to reap any real Benefit by it. And that this Discourse may in some Measure be conducive thereunto, I shall,

I. *First*, State and explain the true Scripture Notion of *Edification*.

II. *Secondly*, I shall shew, what the respective Duty is, both of Teacher and Hearer, of those whose Business it is to minister to the *edifying* of others, and of those whose Desire it is to be *edified* themselves.

III. *Thirdly*, I shall lay open the Vanity of some Pretences, and the Unreasonableness of some Mistakes, concerning *Edification*.

IV. *Fourthly*,

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IV. *Fourthly*, I shall discover the mischievous Consequences of such Pretences and Mistakes, and the Practices grounded thereon. SERM. I.

And *First*, I shall state and explain the true Scripture Notion of *Edification*.

Now Edification is in the Scripture Sense the same with that which in *St. Peter's* Phrase might be called *Growth in Grace*, that is, in Goodness or Holiness; which is the Effect of God's Grace, *sanctifying Men's Hearts*; or in *St. Paul's* (*Col. ii. 19.*) *The Increase of God*, as God by his Holy Spirit is the Author and Promoter of all that is good in us. And therefore in another Place (*1 Tim. i. 4.*) it is called *Godly Edifying*. That is to say, an Increase or Improvement in Godliness; for that is the true Import of the Word, according to its Usage in Scripture.

And the Reason of this its Signification is taken from a Comparison that *St. Paul* frequently makes use of, likening every private *Christian*, and more especially the whole Church of God, to a Building.

Thus we read, *1 Cor. iii. 9. Ye are God's Building*, and *Ver. 16. Know ye not that ye*

SERM. I. *are the Temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*

And so again, Chap. vi. 19. and *Ephes. ii. 20, 21, 22. Ye are built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the Chief Corner Stone; in whom all the Building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy Temple in the Lord. In whom also ye are builded together for an Habitation of God through the Spirit. All which is meant of the Church of Jews and Gentiles, that was now united and made one in Christ.*

And as the Materials of a Building fitly put together, and well jointed and cemented, do render the Building both compact and compleat: By the same Analogy, the Attainment of those Virtues and Graces, which constitute a State of Holiness, and make the *Christian* perfect, and a constant Improvement in them, in the *Unity of the same Faith and Worship*, is the edifying of the whole Body of Christ, as well as every particular Member.

And the Metaphors of *growing and building* are promiscuously used upon this Occasion; because the whole Communion of Christians are, according to St. Peter, (1 Ep. ii. 5.) as *so many live Stones built in one spiritual House.*

And

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And this is the Scripture Notion of *Edifi-* SERM. I.
cation; for the clearer understanding of which, I shall consider now more distinctly wherein it consists, with Relation both to private *Christians*, and the Church in general. And,

First, in relation to private *Christians*, it consists (as I conceive) first in an Establishment and Improvement of their *Christian* Faith and Knowledge. Secondly, in exciting good Affections in them, and bending their Wills to a hearty Compliance with their known Duty. And thirdly, in a Conformity of Practice to such their sound Knowledge, and holy Purposes.

First, I say, it consists in the Establishment and Improvement of their *Christian* Faith and Knowledge; and this is the Foundation of all the rest, without which our good Affections will be loose or languishing, our Resolutions wavering and uncertain, our Practice lame and defective. And therefore *St. Paul* pray'd earnestly and incessantly in Behalf of the *Colossians*, (Chap. i. 9.) that they might increase in the Knowledge of God, and be filled with *the Knowledge of his Will, in all Wisdom and spiritual Understanding*: And as he informs us in the next Chapter, Ver. 5, 6. he

SERM. I. *joy'd to behold their Stedfastness in the Faith of Christ, to see them rooted and built up, and stablished in it, as they had been taught. And Saint Peter's Exhortation, 2d Epist. iii. 18. is to grow in Grace, and the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; as being well aware, that it is impossible for them to thrive in Grace, who are destitute of this saving Knowledge.*

For if Men will begin at the right End, their *Edification* must be founded upon the Conviction of the Mind, and then the whole Superstructure will be strong and regular. And they must be convinced not only of the Truth of the *Christian Religion*, but of the vast Importance and Consequence of its heavenly Doctrines. They must be thoroughly acquainted with the Terms of their Salvation; they must duly consider the Nature and Necessity of the great Gospel Condition of *Repentance*: They must not only be well grounded in the necessary Articles of Faith, but also well instructed in Matters of Duty, and be made sensible of the Integrity and Sincerity of that Obedience which they owe unto God, and their particular Obligation to the Practice of every Virtue, and of the
mighty

Edification stated and explained.

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mighty Aids, and gracious Means, and powerful Motives, afforded to them in the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*. SERM. I.

This is the Fund of true *Christian* Knowledge, a Stock that must be laid in, else the Soul can never prosper. (3 Ep. *John* ii.) But then it is by no Means sufficient barely to know these Things; that is, to entertain some Sort of Notion of them, that shall swim perhaps, and lie uppermost in the Brain, but never sinks down into the Heart, to purify its Corruptions. But Things of this Weight and Moment, if we would profit by the Knowledge of them, should be well digested by serious Consideration, and firmly imprinted in the Mind by frequent Recollection, and duly applied to the practical Judgment or Conscience, that so they may influence every Thought and Motion of our Souls, and be of Service to us in the whole Conduct of our Lives. So shall we be in some good Measure truly *edified*, and in a fair Way to make a farther Progress. For,

Secondly, The *Edification* of private *Christians* does likewise consist in exciting in them good Affections, and Dispositions, and bending their Wills to a hearty Compliance with their

SERM. I. their known Duty. And this is the natural
Consequence of a sober Conviction, and well-grounded Faith. For whosoever believes God to be (as he is represented in Scripture) *the Father of all Mercies, and God of all Comforts*; (1 Cor. i. 3.) whosoever seriously considers, and duly estimates God's infinite Love and Compassion, extended to us in the Bowels of *Jesus Christ*; whosoever impartially reflects how equitable and merciful the Terms of our Salvation are, how easy and reasonable our Obedience, how mighty God's Grace is to enable us to perform it, how precious his Promises to invite us, and how dreadful his Threatnings to deter us from the contrary; I say, whosoever is well established in the Belief of all these important Truths, must needs be suitably affected with them, and cannot but *take Christ's Yoke upon him*, and embrace his *Christian Duty* with the full Consent and Approbation of his Will, as being his chiefest Interest, and only Happiness. And the Will once determined, the Affections will soon be stirring, and the Heart will be filled with divine Love, and ardent Desire, and spiritual Joy in believing. And the Affections thus enkindled, will not languish and expire again,

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II

again, but will vigorously exert themselves in SERM. I. the zealous Service of God, and a Delight in Well-doing, and a fixed Purpose of persevering in it. And when a Man feels within himself, that he is not only in Judgment convinced of the Reasonableness and Necessity of a good Life, but that his Will is also heartily consenting to it, and his Affections warmly engaged for it, and his best Resolutions fully bent upon it, then may he persuade himself, that he is *edified* indeed, that he is a considerable Proficient in Godliness already, and that he is going on to Perfection.

Thirdly, To make our *Edification* complete, there ought to be a Conformity of Practice. For barren Knowledge profiteth nothing, and a hot Fit of Devotion may soon go off again, and leave us very cold, or at least but indifferent. But to walk worthy of the *Lord unto all Well-pleasing, and to be fruitful in every good Work*: This, This is the End of all, and the Crown of all: This is it that will *edify* us here, and save us hereafter. But that Grace and Peace may be fulfilled to us, *in the Knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ our Lord*; that is, that we may be so *edified*, as to feel the comfortable Experience

SERM. I. perience of it in our Hearts; our Obedience should also be compleat and uniform. And (2 Pet. i. 3, 5, &c.) *As his divine Goodness has given unto us all Things pertaining to Life and Godliness, through the Knowledge of him who has called us to Glory and Virtue, we also should give Diligence to add to Faith Virtue, to Virtue Knowledge, [or Prudence,] to Knowledge Temperance, to Temperance Patience, and to Patience Godliness, and to Godliness Brotherly Kindness, and to Brotherly Kindness Charity; which is the Complement of all Virtue, and the Bond of all Perfection.* In a Word, we should endeavour as far as human Frailty will admit, to fulfil every Point of our Duty towards God, our Neighbour, and our selves.

And if we be conscious of a hearty Good-Will and sincere Endeavour to perform this acceptable Obedience, then may we safely conclude, that our *Edification* is perfected; that we have made the utmost Improvement of the Means of Grace, and therefore may *assure our Hearts before God.*

And thus we see that the *Edification* of private *Christians* consists in the Establishment and Improvement of their *Christian* Faith

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Faith and Knowledge, in the exciting and exerting good Affections, and bending their Wills to a hearty Compliance with their known Duty, and a Conformity of Practice answerable to their sound Knowledge and holy Resolutions. It remains,

SERM. I.

Secondly, That I briefly consider wherein it consists, in Relation to the whole Church. For tho' we have hitherto been considering *Christians* as in their private Capacity, as they are so many particular Men, yet this excludes not their Relation to the Church as a Society. For the Means of *Edification* are lodged in the Church, and no where else; and though we may abstract it in our own Thoughts, yet *Edification* is always to be understood with that Reference.

And as the *Edification* of particular Members (considered apart indeed, but yet supposed to be Members) does consist in their Improvement in Faith and good Works; so the *Edification* of the whole Body (as such) consists in the Union and Communion of all its Members, in the same Faith and Worship, and spiritual Love and Concord, which is the best Way of preserving that Faith entire and uncorrupt, and promoting Piety and

SERM. I. Virtue in all and every of its Members. Thus

we read of the first Converts (*Acts ii. 42.*) That they continued stedfastly in the Apostle's Doctrine, and Fellowship, and Breaking of Bread, and in Prayers. And to what End, think you, but that by their Teaching they might be farther enlightened in the Knowledge of *Jesus Christ*, and by communicating with them in the holy *Eucharist*, and other their solemn Devotions, they might receive the more abundant Grace, and be strengthened in their good Purposes by God's Spirit; and thus was the Church edified from the Beginning; and all the Offices and Ordinances of God's Church, the whole Work of the Ministry (as is intimated, *Ephes. iv. 12.*) was appointed for this very End; that is, for the perfecting the Saints, for the establishing them in the Unity of the same Faith, and knitting them together in mutual Charity, and thereby edifying the whole Body of Christ, of which they are the constituent Parts. And this Body is edified in Love, as we see, (*Ver. 16.*) And accordingly we find (*Acts iv. 32.*) That the whole Multitude of them that believed were of one Heart, and of one Soul; Unity of Judgment and Affection serving (as it were)

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SERM. I.

as a spiritual Cement, perfectly to join the Parts together, and make God's Building compact and entire. Whereas on the other Hand, Dissension and Division loosen the Pins, and weaken the Parts, and endanger the demolishing of the whole. And therefore Saint Jude sets a Mark upon these dissenting Members, that will not contribute to the *edifying* of the Church, but rather hinder it. *These be they*, (says he, Ver. 19, &c.) *who separate themselves : But ye, Beloved, build up your selves on your most holy Faith, praying in the Holy Ghost; keep your selves in the Love of God.* Intimating, that the *Edification* of the Church consists in the Unity of Faith and Worship; in which Method, the Assistance of God's Spirit, and the Assurance of his Favour, will be best secured to all the several Members of it. And having thus stated and explained the true Scripture Notion of *Edification*, both with Respect to particular Men, and to the Community of *Christians*, I proceed,

Secondly, To the second Point, viz. to the respective Duty of *Teacher* and *Hearer*; of those whose Business it is to *minister* to the

SERM. I. the *edifying of others*, and those whose Desire it is to be *edified* themselves. And,

First, For those that are employ'd in ministering to the Edification of others, there is a previous Qualification required in them; and that is, that they be lawfully called thereunto, by laying on of the Hands of those who are in Authority, and derive their Authority from the *Apostles of Christ*; which is the only ordinary and regular Mission that the Scriptures give any Warrant to. This Qualification being presupposed, the *Teacher's* Duty, taken in general, is to keep the great End of all spiritual Administrations, the *edifying* and well governing of the People always in View, and to make Use of the best Means they have in their Power, and in the best Manner they are able, towards the Attainment of that End; that is to say, it is incumbent upon them, to employ the spiritual Powers with which God has invested them, the natural Gifts that he has bestowed on them, the Learning and Skill, the practical Prudence and Experience, that by his Blessing they have acquired; to employ these and all their other Talents with main Diligence,

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gence, and Vigilance, and affectionate Zeal, SERM. I.
in order to establish their Hearers in *Christian*
Faith and Knowledge, to acquaint them fully
with what they ought to know and do for
their Souls Health; and not only to inform
their Understandings, but to win over their
Wills and Affections, to the good liking of their
known Duty, and to stir them up as effectually
as may be to the Practice of it. But more
particularly, Faithfulness, the Love of Peace,
Prudence and Charity are required of them.

First, Faithfulness. For they are the *Stewards of God's manifold Grace*, and it is required
of *Stewards, that they be found faithful.* And
so they will best approve themselves by keeping
that which was committed to their Trust,
by taking *Heed to themselves, and to their*
Doctrine, and continuing in them, (1 Tim. iv.
6.) by maintaining the true Catholick Faith,
and teaching others the same, without any
innovation of their own, or nice and fruitless
Questions, which gender Strife, and create
Perplexities, but *minister not to that Edifying*,
which is in Faith. Nor do they promote a holy Life.

Secondly, It is the Duty of Ministers to be
Lovers and Promoters of the Peace of Christ's

SERM. I. *Church*, as well as Assertors of the Faith; and this after the Example of Saint *Paul*, who joy'd (among the *Colossians*, ii. 5.) to behold their Order, and their Stedfastness in the Faith; and Reason good, because in both these together the edifying of the Church, considered as a Society, does chiefly consist; and besides, Order is very instrumental in keeping People stedfast. For a regular stated Way of Worship, in which Profession of the *Christian* Faith is daily made, and the Scriptures constantly read, the Sacraments duly administred, and Prayers put up for God's Protection and Assistance, is certainly the best Preservative against all dangerous Errors and Heresies. And therefore it will behove the faithful Pastor above all Things to exhort his Flock to Unanimity and Uniformity in divine Worship, and to comply with the decent Rites and Usages of the Church, into which they were baptized, that so being incorporated with the Church, and partaking of that general good Influence from the Head, by which *all the Body being knit together, and receiving Nourishment, increaseth with the Increase of God*, (Col. ii. 19.) they may be fitted and prepared for the farther

Com-

Edification stated and explained.

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Communications of divine Grace, and have ^{SERM. I.} their Ears open to his godly Instructions.

Thirdly, It is the Duty of *Ministers* to be prudent, suiting their Administrations to the several Exigences of their Flock, and the Diversity of the Cases that fall under their Observation, that so all their spiritual Wants may be supplied, and they may be every Way profitably *edified*. They ought with all Meekness and Patience to instruct the Ignorant, with all Diligence to exhort the Knowing, with all Carefulness to confirm the Wavering, with all Caution to direct the Doubtful, with all Compassion to comfort the Afflicted, with all Earnestness to excite the Lazy, and to awaken the Secure, and with all Long-Suffering to reprove the Erroneous, and with all Authority correct the Scandalous, and menace the Presumptuous. In short, they ought in this Sense *to become all Things to all Men, that so they may by all Means save some*, and not lose any, through Neglect, and the want of proper and seasonable Application.

Fourthly, The last Duty belonging to *Ministers*, for the better *edifying* the People committed to their Charge, is Charity. By which I mean, a tender Love to the Souls of Men,

SERM. I. and a Zeal or Desire to promote their eternal Welfare.

This is what adds Ornament to all their Gifts, and Usefulness to all their Abilities, and makes all their Labours successful. Their Instructions, when seasoned with this Salt, please Men to their Good, and their Admonitions (though wholesome) are not displeasing; nay, their Reprehensions, though sharp and cutting, do carry a healing Virtue along with them; and in a Word, whatsoever they say or do in the Administration of their Office, when it appears that they are acted by this heavenly Principle, it is acceptable to Mens Ears, and therefore the more likely to be profitable to the Heart.

Secondly, as for the Duty of *Hearers*, or those whose Desire it is to be *edified*, I place it chiefly in two Particulars; *viz.* Meekness and Sincerity of Heart.

First, Meekness, as it stands opposed both to Self-Conceit and Contentiousness; for this is the Soil that is best capable of Improvement: And unless the Seed sown falls upon an humble Heart, it will hardly take good Rooting, much less *bring forth Fruit to Perfection*. This is the Temper
of

of Mind that disposes Men to be teach-^{SERM. I.}
able and tractable, that convinces the Ig-
norant of the want of Instruction, and
makes even the Wise patient of seasonable
Remembrances. This keeps Men still in
the Rank of *Hearers*, nay and *Learners*
too, and suffers them not to erect them-
selves into Judges, nor to be *puffed up* for
one against another, as knowing, that the
End of Hearing is not to make Men more
learned, but better; not able Disputants,
but diligent Doers; as considering, that
'tis God's Ordinance on which they attend,
and whoever it be that *planteth* or *wa-*
tereth, *it is he that giveth the Increase*: That
He is able to prosper the Handy-work of the
meanest Instrument, that is employ'd in
building up his living Temples; and there-
fore in all Humility they submit themselves
to their lawful *Pastor*, expecting (as they
think they safely may) God's special Bene-
diction in their orderly Attendance upon such
Means as he has provided for them in his
Church.

Secondly, Sincerity of Heart is another
preparatory Duty in those that desire to
be *edified*: By which I mean at present a

SERM. I. hearty Desire and real Intention to be actually bettered by what they hear. For though a Desire of Grace be not Grace itself, yet it must be owned to be a good Disposition towards it. And they that make it their sole Aim and End in hearing the Word, so to inform their Understanding, that they may be better able to direct their Consciences, and reform their Manners, they are already in a hopeful Way of doing well, they are already in a growing Condition.

For this Godly Intention once fixed in the Heart will clear the Ground of all that cumburs it, and make it bring forth Fruit abundantly.

It will cure their *Admiration of Mens Persons* and Parts, as knowing that they are but *Labourers in God's Vineyard*, and *Dispensers of his Grace*, according as he has dealt to every one: It will cure the Itch of their Ears, as considering, that this is but vain Curiosity, and implies no Appetite for the *sincere Milk of the Word*, for the Nourishment of their Souls, but only as it is cooked for their Palates. It will cure their Censoriousness too, as being indeed but the Ostentation of their own Knowledge, which shews, that Men
are

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are so brim-full of themselves, that there is ^{SERM. I.} no Room to instill the least wholesome Instruction into them.

I should now pass on to the two last Heads of my Discourse; but not having Time for that at present, let us make the best Use we can of what has been said.

And let *Us* in particular, who live in the Bosom of the Church of *England*, bless and adore the Providence of God, who has cast our Lot in so good a Ground, and made so good a Provision for our everlasting Salvation, in the Communion of that Church into which we were born. A Church whose Faith is built upon the only Foundation *Jesus Christ*, as he is revealed to us in the Gospel; and whose Stedfastness is unmoveable, in adhering to that Faith, and whose Zeal is unwearied in contending for it. A Church whose Liturgy is grave and solemn, easy and comprehensive, warming and affecting. A Church, whose *Ministers* are *Scribes, well instructed to the Kingdom of Heaven, and able to bring forth of their Treasure Things new and old.* And without magnifying themselves, every Way as well gifted and qualified for the *edifying* of Souls, as
C 4 those

SERM. I. those who run before they are sent, and thrust themselves into the *Ministry*, not only without any regular Vocation, but even without competent Preparation, and (as too often it happens) without so much as the first Rudiments of *Christian Knowledge*.

But let *Us*, who have better Lights and better Advantages, let *Us* be exhorted (as we are in Duty bound) to order our *Conversation* so as becomes the Gospel. As becomes that well constituted Church of which we are Members; as becomes the Soundness of her Faith, and the Purity of her Worship; as becomes, and may in some Measure answer all the precious Means that we enjoy.

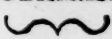
So shall we continue in spiritual Health, so shall we grow in Strength and Vigour, so shall we daily advance in Stature, 'till at last we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and the Knowledge of *Jesus Christ*, to a perfect Man, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fullness of *Christ*. (*Gal. iv. 13.*) Which God grant, &c.

S E R M O N II.

The True Scripture Notion of EDI-
FICATION stated and explained.

I COR. xiv. 26. Latter Part.

Let all Things be done to edifying.

IN discoursing upon these Words I pro-SERM.II.
posed to do these Four Things. 

First, To state and explain the Scripture
Notion of *Edification*.

Secondly, To shew the respective Duty both
of *Teacher* and *Hearer*; of those whose Bu-
siness it is to minister to the *edifying* of others,
and those whose Desire it is to be *edified*
themselves.

Thirdly, To lay open the Vanity of some
Pretences, and the Unreasonableness of some
Mistakes concerning the Nature and Means
of *Edification*.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, To discover the mischievous Consequences of such Pretences and Mistakes, and the Practices grounded thereon.

To the two first Points I have spoken largely already; and I have shewn,

First, That *Edification* is a *metaphorical* Word, meaning the same Thing that Saint *Paul* elsewhere calls *the Increase of God*. (*Col. ii. 19.*) and St. *Peter*, (*2 Pet. iii. 18.*) *Growth in Grace*; that is, a Proficiency in Virtue and Godliness.

And that the Word *Edification* is used in this Sense, is owing to a Comparison very frequent in the Epistles of Saint *Paul*, likening the whole Church of *Christ*, and sometimes the particular Members of it, to a Building; as may be seen, *1 Cor. iii. 9, 10. Ephes. ii. 19, 20.* and several other Places, which I might refer you to.

And as the Materials of a Building fitly put together, and well jointed and cemented, do render that Building both compact and compleat; so in like Manner, the Professors of *Christianity* being well grounded in the Principles of their Religion, and well disposed for Holiness of Life, and perfectly joined together

Edification stated and explained.

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ther in the same Mind, Judgment, and ^{SERM.II.} Practice; God's Building, the Church, is finished as it should be, his whole Body edified, and so are the Members in particular. This is the Scripture Notion of *Edification* taken in the general; but then it may be considered more distinctly and particularly, both in respect of private *Christians*, and of the whole Community of them. And,

First, in respect of private *Christians*, *Edification* will consist in these three Things.

1st, In the Establishment and Improvement of their *Christian* Faith and Knowledge. 2^{dly}, In good Motions and Affections, and a Compliance of the Will with their known Duty. 3^{dly}, In a Conformity of Practice, answerable to the Soundness of their Knowledge, their pious Inclinations and holy Resolutions. But,

Secondly, In regard that the Means of *Edification* are lodged only in the Church, of which every private *Christian* is a Member, *Edification* in this Respect must consist in the Union and Communion of all the Members in the same Faith and Worship, and spiritual Love and Concord, which is the best Method of preserving that Faith entire and uncorrupt,

SERM. II. uncorrupt, and promoting Piety and Virtue
 in every single Person.

And the Nature of *Edification* in this two-fold Respect being thus explained and confirmed by Scripture Proof, such as I found pertinent, I proceeded to the second Head, viz. to shew,

Secondly, The respective Duty both of *Teacher* and *Hearer*; of those whose Business it is to *minister* to the *edifying* of others, and those whose Desire it is to be *edified* themselves.

And as for those who are to be Helpers to the *Edification* of others, I have shewn, that besides other Qualifications and Endowments, it is more especially their Duty, 1st, To be faithful, as they are the Stewards and Dispensers of the Mysteries of God. 2^{dly}, To be Lovers and Promoters of the Peace of *Christ's* Church; that so far as lies in them, there may be no Schism in the Body, but that it may be *edified* in Love and holy Sympathy. 3^{dly}, To be prudent in suiting their Administrations to the Exigences of their several Flocks, and the Diversity of the Cases
 2 that

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that fall under their Care and Consideration. SERM. II.

4^{thly}, To be charitable; *i. e.* thoroughly affected with a tender Love to Mens immortal Souls, and a Zeal for their Welfare, which is the best Recommendation of their Labours, and the most likely to make them successful.

Secondly, As for the Duty of *Hearers*, those whose Desire it is to be *edified*, I place it chiefly in these three Particulars, Humility, Meekness, and Sincerity; Humility being necessary first to prepare the Soil for the Reception of the Seed of God's Word; and Sincerity to clear the Ground of *all* that cumber it, of all Prejudices, false Views, carnal Reasons, and secular Interests, any thing that may hinder the Seed sown from taking Root, increasing and fructifying. And having thus refreshed your Memories with the brief Rehearſal of what I enlarged upon before, because of the Dependence that what is to follow may have upon it. I proceed now,

Thirdly, To lay open the Vanity and Falsehood of some Pretences and Mistakes concerning the Nature and Means of *Edification*.
And

And these Pretences or Mistakes are either such as some Teachers serve themselves of to draw the People after them, or else such as the People are too apt to deceive themselves with, when they cannot endure sound Doctrine, *but heap to themselves Teachers after their own Lusts.* (2. Tim. iv. 3.)

Of the first Sort; that is, such Pretences or Mistakes as some Teachers serve themselves of, in order to draw the Multitude after them; I shall at present only name two.

The first is, that popular Pretence of crying down all Morality, as a dry, empty, *unedifying* Thing.

The second is, that which follows as a Consequence from the former, *viz.* The pretended Necessity of setting up separate Congregations for the sake of better and more spiritual *Edification.* And,

First, As for that popular Pretence of crying down all Morality, as a dry, empty, *unedifying* Thing, it is utterly void of all Truth and Reason; whether we consider the Assertion in itself, or as it is a Charge laid against the *Ministers* of the Church of *England.*

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If we consider the Assertion in itself, it is ap-^{SERM.II.}parently false, because true *Edification* does really consist in Amendment of Life; and all that Faith and Knowledge with which every good *Christian* is (or ought to be) furnished, and all those pious Affections and Resolutions, that spring from that Fountain, have no other End or Use but to direct his Practice, and reform his Manners: And consequently Morality, or the Doctrine of Manners, as it is grounded upon Principles of *Christianity*, is good for the Use of *Edifying*.

And indeed to suppose the contrary, would be a Derogation both to the Authority of Christ, and the Perfection of his Gospel. For Christ himself was a Preacher of Morality; his Sermon upon the Mount is a System of Morality; and in the Practice of it he places the very Pitch of *Christian* Perfection. For, after he had taken much Pains in clearing up the Moral Law, and enforcing the Duties therein enjoined, which had been almost distinguished out of Doors, and made void by the Traditions of the Jewish Doctors, he concludes with this Direction and Encouragement to put it in Practice. *Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which*

SECT. II. *is in Heaven is perfect. Perfect* so far as you are capable of it in moral Goodness, as he is *perfect* in essential Holiness. And shall we still say that Morality is *unedifying*? Was *Christ* then an *unedifying Preacher*? Surely no — Unless it were to such as trusted to themselves, that they were righteous (as some now a-days 'tis to be feared do) and despised others.

And besides, the whole Design of the Gospel was in Truth nothing else but to establish the Practice of all Manner of Godliness and Virtue, upon surer Principles, and better Encouragement, and more prevailing Motives than the World was acquainted with before. For as *St. Paul* himself says (*Tit. ii. 11, &c.*) *The Grace of God that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared unto all Men; teaching us, that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World; looking for that blessed Hope, and glorious Appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works.* And after having thus declared what was the main

main Purport of the Gospel Revelation, and the End of *Christ's* dying for us, he subjoined it as a necessary Instruction to *Titus*, whom he had ordained to be a Minister of Christ; *These Things speak and exhort*; that is, inculcate these Duties upon the Principles aforementioned. Let this be the Superstructure to be raised upon the Foundation of the *Christian* Faith, even good *Christian* Morality; and therefore the Pretence is destitute of all Truth and Reason; that Morality is of itself a dry, empty, and unedifying Thing. And,

Secondly, 'Tis equally false and groundless when 'tis brought as a Charge against the *Ministers* of the Church of *England*.

For what is it that they would lay to our Charge, that we preach only Morality, and pass over the nobler and sublimer Discoveries of the Gospel Revelation? No: That we deny. For our Churches are open, and let who will be Witness, we preach the Incarnation, Life and Death of the Son of God, and the mysterious Oeconomy of the Redemption of Mankind in and through him: We *preach Christ, and him crucified*, together with the Necessity and Sufficiency of the Sa-

SERM. II. tisfaction which he made upon the Cross:

We preach Faith and Repentance, as he has taught us: We preach Remission of Sins, and Justification through God's Free Grace, through *that Faith which is fruitful in good Works*: We preach the Aid and Efficacy of God's Holy Spirit, as necessary to prevent, and further us in all that we think or do: And lastly, *we preach that Life and Immortality, which Christ has brought to Light thro' the Gospel*; and we endeavour to shew the vast Moment and Importance of all these *Gospel* Truths, and the powerful Influence that they have upon a holy Life; and this we hope is useful and edifying.

What is it then that they find Fault with us for? Is it, that when we descend to particular Duties, we teach meer *Morality*, fetched from the dry Definitions, and dull Rules of *Heathen Moralists*, and founded upon the simple Dictates of Nature and Reason? No, we disavow that too. For we preach *Christian Morality*: We derive its Obligations from the Authority of our supreme Law-giver, *who is able to save, and to destroy*: We place its very Essence in a Principle of Love and Duty towards God: We take the Measures of
it

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SERM. II

it from the Precepts and Example of Christ: We resolve the Power of it into the Efficiency of divine Grace: And we strive to enforce it by the mighty Motives of eternal Rewards and Punishments. And this also we hope is useful and *edifying*.

As *edifying* sure, as to dress up a Scheme of mystical Divinity in Similitudes, Allusions, and Allegories, and dark, unintelligible Phrases, such as *recumbent, leaning, resting, and rolling upon the Person of Christ*, and the like, which are meer Amusements, and can never produce any sound Knowledge, or well-grounded Zeal, or conscientious Obedience.

As *edifying* sure, as to resolve all Faith into a certain confident Persuasion of every Man of his own particular Pardon, making his personal Justification and Salvation to be the necessary Consequent of such Persuasion; as if every Man must be saved that can take the Confidence to think he shall. A Notion that may minister to Presumption, but not, I think, to any Improvement in Godliness.

As *edifying* sure, as to be perpetually talking and boasting of the Privilege of the Saints, the Preciousness of the Promises, the Indefeasibility of Grace, and the Certainty of Salva-

SERM.II. tion, with Application and Restriction to a particular Sort of Men, to the Exclusion of all the rest of Mankind. A Supposition that may possibly lull Men asleep in Security, but is certainly a Damp to all virtuous Endeavours.

In one Word, as *edifying* sure, as to cry down all *Morality*, as an insipid, unsavoury Thing, and at the same Time to set up a Divinity in Opposition to it, that has neither Scripture nor Reason to support it. Upon the whole therefore, all this Cry against *moral Preaching*, is either in earnest, or it is not so. If in earnest, it betrays a wretched Ignorance, both of the Nature of the Gospel, and that Edification that is answerable to it. If not in earnest, it is a plain Indication, that they who insist upon it, do rather chuse to *hand'e the Word of God deceitfully*, that they may make a Gain of it, than *by the Manifestation of the Truth to commend themselves to Mens Consciences, in the Sight of God*. And since this Pretence seems to be so groundless and unreasonable, that other which is consequent upon it, must have but a slender Foundation, *viz.*

Secondly,

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Secondly, The pretended Necessity of setting ^{SERM.II.} up separate Congregations, for the sake of better and more spiritual *Edification*. For if the Means of *Edification* as they are in Use in the Church of *England*, be both proper and sufficient (as for ought that I have ever heard objected they are) then what need of an irregular Supplement to a Building, whose Foundation is well laid, and whose Superstructure is every way correspondent? But, not to lay too much Stress upon what has been already said, I shall prove moreover, that this pretended Necessity is neither warrantable in it self, nor fairly allowable in those that do pretend it.

And this pretended Necessity of setting up separate Congregations, for better *Edification*, is not warrantable in it self. First, because it implies a direct Violation of an indispensable Duty. For I think it must be granted, that the Catholick Church of Christ is but one entire Body; and that therefore 'tis the Duty of all the Members, to hold visible Communion with it, where it may be had. And I think (however some are loth to allow it) that there is no holding visible Communion with the Church Catholick, but by communicating with some particular Church:

SERM. II. For Instance, the National Church, into which every one is born, provided the Terms of Communion do not impose any Thing that is unlawful. And I know no other Way of communicating with any particular National Church, but by joining together in the same Faith and Worship, according to the Usage and Constitution of that Church. And therefore by Consequence it is the Duty of every Member of a National Church, duly constituted (or every one that has Opportunity so to be) to communicate with that Church, and strictly to adhere to it. And 'tis a Duty more especially incumbent upon *Ministers* to be Lovers and Promoters of the Peace of God's Church; and therefore 'tis a notorious Breach of Duty in them, to be the Authors and Abettors of Dissention, and to put themselves at the Head of separate Meetings, upon a fond Conceit, that they are eminently qualified to dispense God's Word, and *edify* Souls, though it be in Opposition to his own Appointments, and the essential Laws of all Societies; which is in Effect *to do Evil, that Good may come of it*; (which yet is very uncertain) and to commit Sin to qualify themselves (if that could be believed) to instruct others in Righteousness.

And

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And besides, the *Edification* of the Church, SERM. II.
taken as a Society, consists (as I have formerly observed) in the Union and Communion of all its Members, and their mutual Love and Concord, which is also the best way of keeping their Faith sound, and their Worship pure, and their Practice holy and unblameable. And to sow Division, in Hopes it should yield the greater Increase of Godliness, is a very preposterous Method: To disunite the Parts, in Order to make the Building stronger and fairer, is not the Part of such Master Builders as these Pretenders would be thought to be.

It is in vain to cavil and say, (as a late Author does) that their Meetings are not separate Meetings, because their Doctrine and Worship are in Substance the same with ours, and the Difference only lies in Mode and Circumstance; but that's more than the Church has any Testimony of, or Security for; whereas if all who profess the same Faith, and perform the same Acts of Worship, were allowed to continue in the Unity of the Church, even though they are gone out from us, I am afraid we should purchase Peace at the Expence of Truth; and our common *Christiani-*

SERM. II. *ty* would be found to consist of a Medley
 of loose inconsistent Opinions.

It is as vain to say, that the *Edification* of Souls is of more Consequence than the keeping of the Bounds of Parishes, and a little civil Order. (Answer to *Hafcard*. p. 12.) For it is sacred Order which we contend for, of which God is the Author, without which his Church cannot subsist, nor its Members be truly *edified*. And I do verily believe, that for one Person that in the Simplicity of his Heart is capable in any Degree to be made better in this, there are hundreds that are made worse; partly by the Cunning of those that lie in wait to deceive, and by Means of our Divisions do steal into *Christ's* Flock, and partly through their own Instability and Carnality.

But from what has been said, I hope it is sufficiently plain, that the pretended Necessity of setting up separate Meetings, for the sake of better *Edification*, is altogether unwarrantable in it self.

Secondly, I shall prove *ex abundanti*, that it is by no Means allowable in those that do pretend it. For what are these that thus commend themselves? And what are the

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Pastors of the Church of *England*, that must SERM.II.
not so much as be compared with them? Are
the former the only gifted Men both natural-
ly and supernaturally? Are they the sole Pos-
sessors of all Learning and Science, of Lan-
guages, Idioms, and Customs? Are they
the only Interpreters of Scripture, the only
Masters of sacred Eloquence? Are they the
only Men at resolving Doubts, and convinc-
ing and awakening Mens Consciences? In
short, are they only capable of understand-
ing and explaining, applying and enforcing
the Doctrines and Duties of *Christianity*?
And are all others besides them absolutely un-
qualified? Are they such uncapable Subjects
of God's Gifts and Graces, that neither their
own Studies, nor their Prayers, nor the Im-
position of Hands, nor the Prayers of the
Church can avail them any thing? This I
suppose is more than they will or dare main-
tain: And why then do they condemn our
Ministry in the gross, as insufficient and *un-*
edifying, by gathering separate Flocks to
themselves?

Whence should this Necessity arise, of in-
vading the *Ministry*? It's apparent that they
have not that regular Mission by the Ordina-
tion

SERM. II. tion of Bishops, which was the Practice of the
 whole Church for 1500 Years and upwards. Do they pretend then to an extraordinary and immediate Call, like that of Saint Paul, that they should think the *Woe* to belong to them also, if they preach not the Gospel? This I believe they will hardly assume to themselves, unless it be some *Enthusiasts*, with whom we are not so immediately concerned at present. But if they should, yet Saint Paul informs us (1 Cor. xiv. 32.) that *the Spirit of the Prophets* (even of those that were inspired miraculously) *was to be subject to the Prophets*, for the better Maintenance of the Church's Peace, and the avoiding of Disorder and Confusion. And why then should not they (who to be sure are no better *Prophets* than ourselves) be contented to be determined by the current Practice of the Church Catholick, and the well order'd Constitutions of that particular Church, of which they chuse to be the disjointed Members?

But perhaps, 'tis out of meer Pity and Charity to Souls, that they put their helping Hand to the *Ministry*, because they are sensible that *the Harvest is great, and the Labourers but few*; but this I doubt is an Allegation that there

• *Edification stated and explained.*

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there is no Place for in a *Christian Country* at SERM. II.
this Time of Day. And if there were any
Truth in it, how comes it to pass, that they
flock altogether to wealthy Cities and popular
Towns, that are generally best provided for?
How comes it to pass, that they don't rather
repair to Villages and Hamlets in the remoter
Parts of the Kingdom, where the Churches
are thin, and at great Distances, and not con-
stantly supply'd? Methinks the Necessity
they pretend is laid upon them should con-
strain them to go even thither also.

But lastly, 'tis possible after all, that there
may be something more at the Bottom, than
the meer want of spiritual *Edification*, 'tis pos-
sible they may hold the Terms of our Com-
munion to be unlawful; although that is not
to be supposed, when the Question is only
concerning *Edification*: For it is a needless
Question, whether it be lawful to separate
from such a Church upon the Account of
Edification, with which it is sinful to com-
municate for other Reasons.

But as I take it, they have yielded up this
Point of their own Accord. For now 'tis a
common Practice with them to allow their
strictest Adherents to communicate with us

SERM. II. upon Occasion, and that in the most solemn Offices, at the Manner of whose Administration they sometimes scruple.

And certainly that which is lawful at any Time, is lawful at all Times, and if lawful, then necessary, because the Unity of the Church so requires. For though Rites and Ceremonies be indifferent Things, yet Peace and Unity are not so; and the less Occasion they have of quarrelling with us, (which by their occasional Communion they own to be as little as can be) the more inexcusable is their *Schism*, in dividing from Us. And by this Time I imagine I have said as much, if not more than is needful to shew, how void of Truth and Reason this pretended Necessity is, of opening separate Congregations for the sake of better *Edification*.

And I have been so much the longer in the Examination of those Pretences that some *Teachers* make Use of, to draw the People after them, because 'tis from hence, I fear, that the Separation takes its Rise. For if there were no Leaders, 'tis sure there would be no Followers; and if *Teachers* did not *preach Christ out of Strife*, so many *Hearers* would not be so apt as they are to be *puffed up for one against another*.

I now

I now pass on to the Consideration of such SERM. II.
Pretences and Mistakes as the People are apt
to please and deceive themselves with, when
in Truth, indeed, *they cannot endure sound*
Doctrine.

And these may be conveniently reduced to
two. *First*, Their fundamental Mistake
concerning the Nature of *Edification*. And
Secondly, That which is every whit as fatal,
concerning the Means of bettering themselves,
by forsaking the Church, and following other
Guides. But in speaking to these I shall be
briefer, because I have in Part prevented my
self already: For if the *Teachers* Cause be bad,
the Followers cannot be very good; if they
cannot defend themselves for making a Sepa-
ration, these are not to be excused for adher-
ing to it, and strengthening it by their Num-
bers. But to proceed.

First, The first and fundamental Mistake
which the People (the vulgar Sort especially,
which make up the main Body of Dissenters)
are apt to commit, is concerning the very Na-
ture of *Edification*. And this Mistake is a
Legion in one; it puts on as many several
Forms as there are various Complexions and
Capacities, Interests, and Inclinations in Man-
kind.

SERM. II. kind. Some are for your eloquent *Preachers*, and some are for your rational *Preachers*; some are for your knotty Disputants, and some are for your dextrous Casuists; some are for your moving, your pathetical, your awakening *Preachers*; and many (alas! how great a Multitude they) are for Noise and Tone, and Looks and Gestures, for Figures and Mysteries, Privileges and Promises, Experiences and Evidences, and all Manner of affected Phrases, which the less they understand, the more they admire; and he is the only *precious Man* with them, who can feed them with these spiritual Delicacies. And some at last there are (the judicious few, how few alas! in Comparison) are for sound practical *Preaching*, that explains and confirms the Doctrines and Precepts of *Christianity*, by the Scriptures, in which they are taught, that applies them home to the Consciences of Men, that gravely exhorts to a Belief and Observance of them, by Reasons taken from the Authority of the Revelation, and the Duty which they owe him; and rationally persuading them by Arguments drawn from their own Hopes and Fears. But I must once again lament the Scarcity of such *Hearers*,

Edification stated and explained.

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Hearers, for 'tis Matter of just Complaint SERM. II.
(and a Complaint which Mr. *Baxter* himself frequently makes) that the Generality of People are very unmeet Judges of Sermons: For, commonly speaking, whatever it is that tickles their Ears, and touches their Imaginations, that excites their Admiration or any other transient Passion. In short, whatever happens to please them, they know not why, nor how, that they take for *edifying* Discourse, and the present Impression or Commotion that accompanies it in the hearing, that they suppose to be their real *Edification*. Whereas in Truth, *Edification* is a Growth in Grace and Godliness; it is such an Improvement in *Christian* Knowledge, as may be effectual to influence not only our present and sudden Affections, but all our deliberate Purposes and future Actions. And the Discourses that best serve this End, are most profitable for *Edification*, which does not consist either in meer Speculation; for that is Light without Heat, that will never warm our Affections, nor stir us up to Action: Nor does it consist in the bare Agitation of Fancy or Passion; for that is Heat without Light, that will urge us on apace, but never guide

guide us right: Nor does it consist in imperfect Volitions, and half formed Purposes; for in one Word, let the Sermon be never so *edifying*, the *Hearer* is not properly *edified*, till he has put it in Practice; nor is his *Edification* compleated by the Practice of some Parts only of his Duty. But when his *Heart is opened* (as *Lydia's* was, Acts xvi. 14.) to attend to all Things that are *spoken by God's Minister*, and to endeavour to do accordingly, then at last he is perfectly *edified*. And whoever place their Edification in any Thing else, or the compleatest Degree of it in any Thing less than this, are palpably mistaken about its very Nature. And no Wonder that they which are so should be liable to the other Mistake, *viz.*

Secondly, In thinking to better themselves by forsaking the Church, and following new Guides. For as for their *edifying* better elsewhere: *First*, It is very uncertain in respect to themselves. *Secondly*, 'Tis highly improbable in respect of God. And, *Thirdly*, It is, strictly speaking, impracticable, and inconsistent with itself.

First, It is very uncertain in respect of themselves. For if they be of the Number
of

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of those injudicious, mistaken *Hearers*, which I mentioned but now (as by their Fickleness 'tis likely they are) then 'tis odds but they chuse as much amiss, as they judged at first; and if they bring the same Lusts and Prejudices along with them, they (let their *Teacher* be who he will, if it were an *Angel from Heaven*) they are likely to be just where they were, nay, 'tis possible they may be under a quite contrary Deception to what they were before; and as they then fancy'd that they could not be *edified*, where they might; so may now be possessed, that they are most *edified*, when they are the farthest from it; and thus *the last Error shall be worse than the first.*

Secondly, It is highly improbable in respect of God. For Paul *may plant*, and Apollos *may water*; the *Preachers* may want no Gifts nor Diligence, but 'tis God alone *that gives the Increase*. And God's Blessing is most reasonably and comfortably to be expected, in an orderly Attendance upon those Means, which he hath allotted us in his Church, and an humble Reliance upon his Grace to make them efficacious for our Good. And in that Case, Men may *edify* under any *Minister*, even the meanest and vilest that

SERM. II. fits in *Moses's Seat*, though it be one of those
 ~~~~~ that say and do not, and consequently cannot  
 give that Force and Weight to his Words, that  
 another Man might. But if Men will break  
 the Fold, and out of Wantonness seek for  
 better Pasture, 'tis as frequent as 'tis just in  
 God, to cause them to wander like blind Men  
 for lack of Meat, and to give them up to  
 be led to and fro' by the Spirit of Error.

Thirdly, 'Tis in Strictness impracticable,  
 and inconsistent with itself. For Edification  
 can never consist with the Breach of a known  
 Duty: And Unity and Charity are plain Du-  
 ties, that Saint *Paul* frequently inculcates  
 with all possible Vehemence. Hear him,  
 how passionately he recommends Unity to  
 his *Philippians*, Chapter ii. 1, 2. *If there be  
 therefore any Consolation in Christ, if any Com-  
 fort of Love, if any Fellowship of the Spirit,  
 if any Bowels and Mercies, fulfil ye my Joy,  
 that ye may be like minded, having the same  
 Love, being of one Accord, of one Mind.* And  
 in another Place he tells us, *that Charity edifi-  
 eth*, (1 Cor. viii. 17.) and that in Opposition  
 to naked Knowledge, and all other Gifts be-  
 sides, which *without Charity*, as we see in  
 the 13<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the First Ep. to the *Corin-  
 thians*,

*Edification stated and explained.*

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*thians*, avail nothing. And therefore who so-  
ever in seeking after spiritual Improvements,  
loses his Charity by the Way, his Loss is  
greater than his Gain can be: And he is then  
industriously going backward in *Christianity*,  
when he thinks himself no mean Proficient.

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And from these several Considerations it  
appears, that Separation from publick Assem-  
blies, upon Pretence, or in Hopes of better  
*Edification*, is an ill grounded Expectation,  
that miserably deceives Men.

It remains now, that,

*Fourthly*, and Lastly, I discover to you  
some of those mischievous Consequences of  
the aforementioned Pretences and Mistakes,  
and the Separation occasioned by them; of  
which very briefly. And,

*First*, The first bad Consequence is (and  
that bad enough in all Reason) that *Edifica-  
tion* is hereby manifestly hindered, and almost  
wholly obstructed; for when once Men en-  
tertain false Notions concerning the very Na-  
ture of *Edification*, into which their *Teachers*  
most commonly lead them, or in which at  
least they are willing to sooth them, for their  
own Advantage; I say, when Men have once  
imbibed such wrong Notions, they soon grow

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stiff in them, and upon their imaginary Proficiency, they are wonderfully *puffed up* with spiritual Pride, and *wiser in their own Conceits, than seven Men that can render a Reason.*

And when once they have fortified themselves in their own Conceit, and separated from the Church into the Bargain, they are deaf to all Advice and Reproof from that Side, and on they go obstinately in their own Way, *ever learning, but never able to come to the Knowledge of the Truth*: For as Solomon says, *The Instruction of Fools is Folly.* (Prov. xvi. 22.)

Secondly, Another Consequence of such Pretences and Practices is, that they create Strife and Animosity: For by sad Experience we have found it, that no Differences are carried so high as Differences about Religion; no Hatred so fierce and fell as religious Hatred, especially when fed and enraged by the *sly Abettors* of Party and Faction. So that in good Truth, whilst we have been so long disputing about Religion, we have hardly any Thing but the Name left; for Uncharitableness has almost eat out its very Vitals.

*Thirdly,*



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*Thirdly*, Another pernicious Consequence (and the last I shall now mention) is, that hereby a wide Gap is opened to endless Divisions, and all manner of Errors and *Heresies*. For if Men must needs be at Liberty to chuse for themselves, and please themselves, and be *edified* as they think in their own Way; I am sure, 'tis as impossible for them to be of one Faith, as of one Opinion; nay, it were impossible to set Bounds to this extravagant Humour, and satisfy such opinionated People, even tho' the *Ministers* of the Church at present were as miraculously endow'd as the *Apostles* themselves. The Example of *Corinth* is sufficient to convince us of this. For tho' Saint *Paul* was the *Master Builder*, who laid the Foundation of *Christianity* there, (1 Cor. iii. 10.) Tho' he was their Father who had begotten them through the Gospel; (1 Cor. iv. 15.) yet they were for an eloquent Preacher, they were for *Apollos*, in Comparison of whom, Saint *Paul* himself was thought but rude in Speech. (2 Cor. xi. 6.) And some of the Jewish Race 'tis like they were for *Cephas* the Apostle, who was of the Circumcision. And others (but still out of Opposition) they

were for Christ, ignorant the mean while, that it was but one and the same Christ, who was unanimously and uniformly preached by these his *Apostles* and *Ministers*; ignorant that *whether it was Paul that planted, or Apollos that watered, it was God* (and he only) *that could give the Increase*. In short, amidst this Strife, and Divisions, and *Envyings for one against another*, they had e'en wrangled Christ and his Religion out of Doors again. They only usurped his sacred Name to patronize their *schismatical* Dissentions; but they knew nothing of *what Manner of Spirit they were of*; they knew nothing of the true Design, the Genius and Temper of *Christianity*.

And if the Gift of Inspiration itself could not sufficiently recommend the *Apostles* for *edifying Preachers*; if that could not hinder some from *preaching Christ*, and others from hearing him preached, *out of Strife* in those early Days; no Wonder, that the same foolish but conceited Prejudices should produce the like and worse Effects among us. No Wonder the Face of this poor divided Church should be covered with such a numerous swarm of Sects, her Unity broken by  
such

such an infinite Diversity of Opinions, and her Health endangered by such pestilent and pernicious *Hereses*: Some of which (as do the *Quakers*) even deny the Lord that bought them, and set up a *Christ* within, in Opposition to *Christ* incarnate, and a *Christianity* of their own inventing, even in direct Opposition to *Christ*'s positive Institutions; and they do in Effect turn the Gospel all into *Allegory* and Fable. But that which is notorious in the Eye of the World is, that they utterly renounce the two Sacraments of *Baptism*, and the *Lord's Supper*, which are Ordinances so essential and peculiar to our holy Religion, that by the Observance of them, the *Christian Believers* and *Worshippers* stand plainly distinguished from the Professors of all other Religions over the Face of the Earth.

And yet these Renouncers of both the *Sacraments* will needs call themselves *Christians*; fain would they be so deemed, in Spite, I may say, of *Christ* himself; that is, in open Defiance of his most solemn Ordinances, which if any Thing else be, must certainly be reckoned amongst the Fundamentals of our *Christian* Profession.

And as this unaccountable *Sect* hath given no sure Testimony either to the Church, or to the World, of their being *Christians*, but rather too apparent Signs to the contrary; so we have no publick Security, nor can we have from the rest of the *Separatists*, that they keep the *Christian Faith whole and undefiled*, or direct their Worship to its true Object.

The visible Advantage of our Church is, that we have a publick *Liturgy*, which is the standing Evidence of what we believe, and whom, as well as how we worship. And they who continue in conscientious Communion with our Church must constantly make Profession of their Faith in the *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Three Persons*, but *One God*, and pay their Worship to the same adorable Three in One; the Profession of our Faith is made in those ancient Formularies, called the *Apostle's* and the *Nicene Creed*, and a third ascribed to Saint *Athanasius*, which though it be indeed later than his Time, is yet nevertheless admirably contrived both to guard against the Revival of old Errors, and the Introduction of new ones. And our Devotions also are expressed in a  
stated



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stated *Form of sound Words*, which is a safe and constant Guide to us in paying our Adoration and Worship to its proper Object; and these Forms of Profession and Devotion being most of them constantly and daily used, and the rest upon more solemn Occasions; and all of them lying open to the View of Mankind, they are the clearest Testimony both of the *Orthodoxy* of our Faith or Belief, and the Propriety of our Worship; and the most likely Means to preserve both in their Integrity.

But now, 'tis quite otherwise with the *Separatists* of all Kinds, who use no settled Rules, no publick Forms in their Religious Assemblies, they have not given Satisfaction or Security to the Church from which they separate, of their Soundness in Point of Faith; I judge them not, 'tis possible they may be found in both Respects; I only say, they have not given, they cannot give any Satisfaction, any standing Evidence that they are so, because they are not in a proper Method for it; and we have the more Reason to fear for them, they are at least the more in Danger, because they want one of the best Preservatives (humanly speaking) against Error and Corruption; *i. e.* a stated *Liturgy*: Without which,

*SERM. II.* which, 'tis certainly much easier for *Deceivers* privily to creep in, and mislead the simple Souls, and *tofs them about with every Wind of Doctrine*. The *Popish Emissaries* are great Masters of this Craft, they have been actually discovered in the Guise and Place of dissenting *Teachers*, pleading vehemently and earnestly for *purser Worship*, and *better Edification* (the very Thing we have been speaking of) and railing bitterly against Ceremonies and Forms. And it is observable, that when they busy themselves about the Devil's Husbandry, in sowing the Tears of Error and *Heresy*, they have been always profest Enemies to Forms, because indeed Forms are the greatest Enemies to them, as being the best Fences against that Disorder and Confusion which they labour to introduce, in Hopes to lead the bewildered People from Error to Error, 'till they bring them at last to the *Pope's* infallible Chair, who alone (they'll tell you) is able *to bring Order out of Confusion*, and to settle the Judgments and Consciences of Men, by a final Determination of all religious Controversies.

But I have entered farther than I intended into a large Field of Discourse, which yet  
was

was not wide of my Purpose, because it has shewn us in the strongest Light the Vanity of that Pretence of hunting after new and strange *Teachers* for the sake of better *Edification*, and the Danger of the Peoples following them they know not whither, into a Wilderness of Uncertainty, perhaps to their everlasting Perdition.

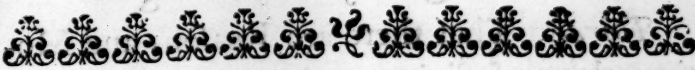
And now because People are so prone to mistake the Nature of *Edification*, and their Mistakes are often of dangerous Consequence, and because 'tis of so much Moment to be rightly informed in this Point, I shall for a Close of all leave a short Rule with you who are my particular Charge, whereby every Hearer of any common Capacity may make a pretty sure Judgment when he hears an *edifying* Sermon, and also when he is edified by it as he ought to be.

Mark then, when the Preacher instructs the People in the Nature of their Christian Duty in general, or of any one Christian Duty in particular; when he explains the Duty in its several Branches, as needs shall be; when he shews the Obligation to perform it in Obedience to God's holy Will, *who is the only Lawgiver that is able to save*  
and

**SERM. II.** *and to destroy.* When he lays down useful and prudent Rules for the better Performance of it; when he shews how practicable and acceptable that Obedience will be, through the Assistance of God's Holy Spirit, and the Merits and Mediation of Christ our Redeemer. *Now to God the Father, &c.*







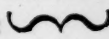
## S E R M O N III.

The Danger of consenting to the Enticements of Sinners.



PROVERBS i. 10.

*My Son, if Sinners entice thee, consent thou not.*

**T**HIS paternal Advice of the wise SER. III.  
Solomon is founded upon these three   
Suppositions, viz.

*First*, That Sinners, those who are habitually wicked and corrupt themselves, will be apt to solicit and entice others to be their Companions in Sin.

*Secondly*, That they have deluding Arts and Wiles, such as are but too likely to ensnare the unexperienced and unwary, and therefore there is the more need of Caution against them.

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*Thirdly*;

SER. III. *Thirdly*, That there are Reasons and Motives always sufficient to determine every considerate Man against yielding to any of their Solicitations or Enticements.

These I shall make the several Heads of my Discourse, in order to shew you the more plainly and convincingly, both the Necessity of our being cautious, and the Reasonableness of being very resolute in refusing to comply with such wicked Seducers. *My Son, if Sinners entice thee, consent thou not.* And that we may learn to be upon our Guard, let it be considered,

*First*, That Sinners, *i. e.* those who are habitually wicked and corrupt themselves, will be apt to solicit and entice others to be their Companions in Sin.

And this is no other than must be expected, since they are continually prompted to it, and actually set on Work, both by the Instigation of the Devil, and their own depraved Inclinations.

For *he that committeth Sin is of the Devil*, (as St. *John* speaks, 1 Ep. iii. 8.) who sinned, and was a Tempter to Sin, *from the Beginning.* And

And habitual Sinners are Children so like SER. III. their Father the Devil, and so obedient to him, *that the Lusts of their Father they will do.* They are always ready to imitate him, both in sinning, and tempting to Sin; and they love to be employ'd in setting his Nets, and decoying their Fellows in.

When *Satan* made his first Assault upon our first Parents in their State of Innocence, he assumed to himself the Form of a subtle Serpent, because he had never a Sinner to send upon the Errand: But as soon as he had imposed upon *Eve's* Credulity, he entrusted her, as the properest Instrument to work upon *Adam*. And since the Time that we were so unhappily corrupted in the Fountain, he knew that the readiest and easiest Way of conveying actual Pollution would be from one to another: and therefore he has always made Use of Sinners, as the most successful Tempters to Sin: Personal Apparitions and immediate Addresses he rarely uses, except to such as are already well confirmed and hardened in Iniquity: To Novices and young Beginners, who are usually a little timorous and tender, that Method 'tis like would be more affrighting, than prevailing: But when

I the

**SER. III.** the Temptation is presented by one Companion, one Friend to another, under that familiar Shape, the grand Tempter lies hid and unobserved, and his Insinuations are so kind and gentle, that they find their Way, and work their Effect insensibly; no Force the mean while offered, nor any Harm suspected.

And the Devil is pretty sure of the Industry as well as Inclination of such his Agents. For their Lusts are the Counterpart of his Will; and they then most gratify and serve themselves, when they most effectually promote his Designs.

○ Nay in many Cases they cannot enjoy their own beloved Sins, they cannot execute their wicked Intentions, without engaging others in a Partnership with them. The *Drunkards* must have their Companions in Excess; the *Unclean* their shameless Prostitutes, or some more innocent Prey; the *Thieves* their Setters and Accomplices; the *Factionious* their Cabals; and *Plotters* their Confederates. And as these and many other sinful Practices cannot be carried on without some Sort of Confederacy, so all Sinners almost do at least affect to have Company; either out of a wicked Purpose, to propagate the



the Sin as far as they can, or else out of SER. III.   
Hopes to find Shelter themselves in the Herd.  
Men that are irreligious and profane, will  
take much Pains to instill their lewd Principles  
into others, that so they may make a  
Party strong enough (if that could be) to  
run Religion quite down, and hiss it out of  
the World, or at least to insult it with their  
rude Scoffs and Cavils.

And Persons of loose and vitious Lives,  
love to make their Comrades as bad as them-  
selves; and they are glad to hear as much of  
others too, with whom they happen not to  
confort; they are glad to find the Generality  
of the World so much corrupted as they are,  
as flattering themselves, that this may be suf-  
ficient to keep them in countenance, and that  
so much the less will their particular Share be  
in the common Guilt and Scandal.

And upon these Views, and other the like  
Inducements, ill Men have been always very  
instrumental in corrupting their Brethren.  
And this is it that has helped to enlarge the  
Devil's Empire, and make the Degeneracy  
and Corruption of Mens Manners so very  
great in all Ages and Places of the World, as  
it has been.

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And as it has been always customary (and never without Reason) to complain of the present Times : So the Complaint was never juster than in our Days, and among our selves.

The *Atheism* of *Italy*, and the *Scepticism* of *France*, have long since travelled hither and found a very hospitable Reception : And whilst we pretend to abhor their gross *Idolatries*, we secretly (and I wish it were only secretly) hug their foulest Immoralities. And the very worst of their Vices thrive so well in this colder Climate, that they are likely enough to be propagated still farther, by our Means, and with our Improvements.

For this City, as 'tis one of the greatest *Emporiums* in the World for Trade, so 'tis one of the largest *Marts* for Vanity and Sin ; it has a vast Magazine of Temptations of all Sorts and Sizes, in all Colours and Dresses : It abounds in all manner of Professions, and Teachers of Impiety ; the *Atheist* boldly denying the Being of a God, and the *Deist* slyly undermining it ; the *Libertine* ridiculing all Religion, and the *Latitudinarian* melting it away, and resolving it into Reasons and Appointments merely secular.

And

And the Practice of Iniquity must needs abound proportionably, where the main Checks to it are so industriously taken out of the Way. And so in Fact it is, for as we want *Precedents* for no kind of Sin, so I think we have *Advocates* too for most. And the *Factors* for *Satan* are so busy, and so well concerted in carrying on his Interest, that they seem to have their *Societies* and *Fraternities* for that Purpose: At least they are so thick planted almost every where, that a Man must needs go out of the World, if he would wholly avoid them. And how difficult it is to get clear from them, all good Men observe with Concern, and all careful Parents must needs lament with great Grief of Heart, whilst they daily espy so many Wrecks of Conscience, Fortune, and Reputation in other Mens Children, and have so much Reason to apprehend the same in their own. And since Sinners are always so apt to solicit and entice others to Sin; and since there are so many now-a-days combined together, or deeply engaged, however, in this pernicious Design, this shews the Necessity of the Caution given in the Text, *not to consent to them*; which is the more needful to be inculcated, because,

SER. III.

*Secondly*, These *Seducers* have such deluding Arts and Wiles, as are but too likely to ensnare the Unexperienced and Unwary, especially when the Snare is framed and set on purpose to meet the Follies and Levities, the Heats and Sallies of Youth; and therefore the Caution is very properly directed, as from the Father to his Son; *my Son, if Sinners entice thee, consent thou not.*

Now it is not easy, hardly possible indeed, to enumerate the several Engines of Deceit, and the various Ways of Application, that cunning Practitioners in Vice make use of, to persuade others to bear them Company: But they may be reduced in general, I think, to these two: It is done either, *First*, By perverting Mens Principles; or, *Secondly*, By corrupting their Morals: Both of them Methods that are subservient and helpful to each other; both fatal to many a heedless Soul. And

*First*, In order to pervert Mens Principles, the Approach is made in different Ways, according as they find the Subject capable of Impression. If they can dispose their Minds to *Atheism*, that shall be attempted, not by crudely and nakedly proposing it (for in that

Form



Form it is very hard to be digested) but by <sup>SER. III.</sup> infusing it gradually, under the Cover of certain philosophical Opinions, concerning the Nature of human Souls, (for Instance) as if they were material and mortal, and consequently not properly accountable, which is all that the *Atheist* would contend for; and therefore this Opinion is in its Tendency plainly *atheistical*. But if it will not pass under this Disguise, some other shall be found out, or perhaps the Aid of *Deism* next called in, to palliate so foul a Cause.

And here a mighty Reverence shall be pretended for the Dictates of Reason, and natural Religion; and all Revelation shall be exploded for a Cheat (as not being supported with sufficient Evidence, tho' it has all that is needful or fitting) but encumbered with unintelligible *Mysteries* and *Absurdities*, tho' they be but just such *Mysteries* and *Absurdities*, as the *Atheist* would charge the Being of a God with.

If this will not pass neither for good Argumentation, the next Recourse, not unlikely, is to forced *Criticisms*, and unnatural Interpretations of Scripture, which though they do not set aside its Authority, yet they render it very insignificant, by depraving its genuine

SER. III, Sense, and forcing it to give Countenance to the most monstrous *Errors* and *Heresies*.

Where this Flourish of false Reasoning is not thought proper to be apply'd, or likely to succeed, the Weapon of profane Wit 'tis probable may be turned against God and the most venerable Mysteries of Religion; the Scripture Phrase shall be the most abusively employ'd in the most ludicrous Matters, and to the vilest Purposes; the *Scoffers* who have little else to say, will vent their extravagant Jest, in hopes that this Madness may pass for Mirth, and invite others to take part with them; in hopes that for want of Arguments, they may jeer People out of their Religion, and give them a Dislike to it, by making it appear ridiculous.

Lastly, To name no more at present; another Engine that is used to shake Mens Principles, is to debase the Authority of Religion, and represent it, as if it were what the *Atheists* would have it, a meer politick Contrivance; and as if the very Order of the Priesthood, and the spiritual Power that they have always been supposed to have, were the Usurpations of those who exercise it for their own Advantage. A ready Way this, to de-

give a Contempt not only on the Persons, but the Office of those that *minister in holy Things*, and through their Sides to wound Religion it self; to give the *Laity* mean and contemptible Notions of it, and bring them to an Indifferency concerning it. And there is none of these Insinuations (though some of them are very gross) if not attended to, but will easily enough find its Way into *Green-Heads*, and make an Impression in vain and unsettled Minds.

For when the *Atheist* pretends to argue shrewdly, and *philosophize*; when he calls out confidently for better Proof, and insists upon rigid Demonstration; this shocks those that are uncatechized, and have but weak Understandings; and it tempts those that have some smattering in Knowledge, to appear more knowing than they are: Which Vanity they gratify by listing themselves among those curious Enquirers, whom nothing less than Demonstration will satisfy, and yet Demonstration it self will not satisfy.

And when the *Deist* comes in with his Refinings upon natural Reason and Religion, without admitting the Truth of Revelation; when he undervalues the main Evidences of

SER. III. *Christianity, viz. the Prophecies and Miracles,*  
 compared with the intrinsic Excellency of the Doctrines and Precepts, and goes about to invalidate its Authority by cavilling Objections, not levelled at the Foundation, but only relating to some Difficulties in the *Chronology*, and seeming, but not real Inconsistencies.

I say, such a Man as this being very ready and dextrous at urging those Cavils, that he has repeated a hundred times over, passes for a wonderful Genius, and a Man mighty in Disputation, with those that are more prone to admire new Things, than they are able to examine old: And if they have any Share of Capacity, or which will serve the Turn as well, a good deal of Conceit, 'tis odds but they catch the Itch of Disputing and Cavilling, from those that make it so much their Business.

Thus when the *Heretick* subtly evades and evacuates the Authority of Scripture, by pretending the most rational Construction of it, there are enough who in spite of all good Sense, will pertinaciously adhere to such *Rationalists*, that they themselves may be reputed great Reasoners.

So when the *Scoffer* (blunt as his Artillery is) lets fly boldly against Heaven, with his  
 impious



impious Jests, the Boldness of the Attempt SER. III.  
makes wise Men tremble, and Fools stare  
and wonder: But yet there are not wanting  
such egregious Fools, as are ready to *make a*  
*Mock of Sin*, and will imitate this lowest and  
vilest Attempt to Wit, if it be but because  
they have no other.

In fine, when the Function of God's Mi-  
nisters is treated with Contempt and Con-  
tumely, and some of the Essentials of the *Chri-*  
*stian* Religion are resolved into *Priestcraft*, or  
brought down to the Level of meer civil  
Constitutions; this is a Notion that will gree-  
dily be swallowed by all that are inclined to  
*Libertinism*, and would be glad to get free  
from the Shackles of Religion, which they  
cannot so well do, so long as they retain any  
Reverence for the Ministry, or any just Awe  
or Regard for the Discipline of the Church.

And by these, and other such Arts as these,  
Men are often perverted from their Principles,  
and that once done, it cannot be hoped they  
should preserve the Integrity of their Manners.  
For being unsound in the Foundation, they  
cannot be very strong in the Superstructure:  
Being deficient in Faith, they will go near to  
be very lame too in Practice.

They

SER. III. They may have their *complexional* Virtues; *i. e.* the Semblances of Virtue, but the real Effects of Constitution; and they may have their natural Aversion to some Vices, or politically refrain from them: But they lay always open to any Temptation that bids them high enough, because they want a Principle to keep them steady. But

*Secondly*, To make the Work complete, your *crafty Seducers* will not fail to make their Attack more directly and industriously to corrupt Mens Morals.

And here they use Variety of Artifice and Address, to bring Men to their Lure, and the Success too often answers Expectation.

Sometimes Virtue and Vice shall be misrepresented, and miscalled, that so they may be mistaken one for another. Seriousness in Religion shall be called Moroseness, or Singularity; and the wildest Frolics shall be but innocent Gaiety; and a modest Refusal to comply with the wicked Customs or dangerous Liberties of the Age, shall be called Squeamishness, or Bashfulness, and Want of good Breeding. And the ill Sound of these Nick-Names often influences weak Minds, that are not thoroughly seasoned with Religion,  
and

and draws them into sinful Compliances for SER. III.  
fear of such unjust and groundless Reproaches.

Sometimes the Bait of Pleasure shall be held forth, and the Plea of Complexion and Appetite shall be advanced, in Opposition to Reason and Religion. It shall be pretended, that God hath given us all our Faculties, sensitive as well as rational, and that he has furnished the World with Objects suitable to afford Entertainment to each; and that the Enjoyments of Sense cannot be thought contrary to Reason; nor our Duty in any Point an Enemy to our Pleasure; but that the true Art and End of living, is to make Life as pleasant as may be, and to gratify every Inclination without Check or Controul. Which is such an Indulgence to the Flesh, and such a Recommendation of Sensuality, as corrupt Nature is too willing to hearken to, and the Warmth of Youth too ready to close with.

But this Plea is still more powerful, when 'tis proposed in the charming Words of some agreeable Companion, such as the Book of the Son of *Sirach* fits to his Mouth (*Wisdom* ii. 6, &c.) *Come on therefore, let us fill our selves with costly Wine, and Ointments, and let no Flower of the Spring pass by us. Let*

*SER. III. us crown our selves with Rose-buds, before they be withered. Let none of us go without his Part of our Voluptuousness; let us leave Tokens of our Joyfulness in every Place; for this is our Portion, and our Lot is this.* Such an Invitation as this is rarely unwelcome to the younger and the looser sort; nay, it often betrays the unguarded Innocence of those who would otherwise have no great Propensity to Vice, especially when the courteous Inviter makes *Provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof*, both in himself and others; and is officious to fulfil all the irregular Desires, that he by his corrupt Communication has enkindled in the Breasts of such as he is enticing to Debauchery. And this Method of attacking Mens Virtue is the more dangerous and fatal, because it brings the Temptation home to them, drest up in all its Allurements, and furnishes the Opportunity and every thing else that is necessary for the Accomplishment of the Sin, and leaves nothing for the deluded Sinner, but only to comply and be undone.

Sometimes again Men are led or betrayed into Sin by a Substitution of something in the room of Virtue, that has only the Shadow of it;



*the Enticements of Sinners.*

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it ; such are bodily Austerities and Abstinence, SER. III.  
when looked upon, not as instrumental Du-  
ties or Helps, but preferred before the *weigh-*  
*tier Matters of Piety and Mercy* ; or by an  
easy Composition for Sin, such as *Confession* to  
a *Priest*, *Penance*, and *Absolution* ; or by the  
fallacious Expedient of salving all by a late,  
or perhaps a Death-Bed Repentance, when  
the Pleasure and Power of sinning is ceased,  
and a Man has nothing left to do but to make  
his peace and die. And these are Persuasions  
that are very likely to find a welcome Enter-  
tainment, because they make Virtue cheap,  
and Sin light, and shew Men the shortest and  
easiest Way to Heaven ; how they may be  
very righteous and religious, without much  
Trouble to themselves ; how they may sin  
with Security, because they may quit the  
Score when they please ; or how they may  
suck out all the Marrow and Sweetness of Sin,  
and satisfy God at last with the very Dregs  
of Life, and those feeble Efforts towards  
Repentance, which succeed after the Im-  
potence of sinning is come upon them, or  
Death is laying hold of them ; than which,  
no Sinner could desire a greater Encourage-  
ment to Sin.

Lastly,

**SER. III.** Lastly, for 'tis endless to multiply Instances, Men are sometimes enticed and encouraged to Sin, by lessening the Danger of it in their Eyes, and giving them Hopes of a safe Retreat in God's Mercy at last, insinuating, that he is not so *austere a Master*, as to require too rigid a Virtue from us, or an exact and minute Account of all our Failings; that great Abatements will be made for Infirmitly and Surprize, the Heat of Passion, and the Violence of Temptation; and that God is too compassionate a Judge after all, to inflict so disproportionate a Punishment as eternal Misery, for the sinful Pleasures of a short Life, that are more fugitive than Life itself is. And under this Pretence all Sins are softened into Frailties, and the Mercy of God is interpreted Easiness; and the Terror of his Justice, and the Apprehension of a Punishment that is due to Sin is in a manner quite removed, and Sinners are emboldened to take Sanctuary in the Hopes of Indemnity.

And these, and many other such Delusions as these, pass the more easily upon Mankind, because they are suited to the Taste of our depraved Nature; and strike in with our natural Proclivity to Sin; and weak Persuasions

will

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will serve the Turn where strong Inclination draws the same Way. And this is the true Source of that Corruption of Manners, of which there is so just and general a Complaint; and when Men are once tainted in their Morals, there is no great Art required to pervert their Principles; for they will naturally fly to ill Principles, to countenance and justify their Immoralities. But indeed it is no great Matter what Principles such Men own; for they can conform to any thing, so long as they may be suffered to enjoy their darling Vices; and they are prepared to shift their Principles too, or shake them off, when any Reason of Moment is offered; *i. e.* when any valuable Profit or Convenience invites to it. And this those that are well practised in seducing of others are so sensible of, that if they can but thoroughly debauch a Man, they reckon then that they have him entirely at their Beck, and can mould him into what they please; and they seldom fall short in their Account. This I observe only to confirm what I hinted above, that there is so close an Affinity between Mens Principles and Morals, that if the one be infected, 'tis the easiest Thing that can be,

to

SER. III. to convey the Infection to the other, or rather that it is very hard indeed to prevent the Communication.

And by this Time I believe I may have sufficiently shewn, that the subtle Seducers have Arts and Wiles that are but too likely to ensnare the unexperienced and unwary.

And young Men are most exposed to this Danger, because their Experience is but narrow, and their Conduct not often the best: They are apt rather to drive with the Tide of Inclination, or be carried away with every Gust of Passion, than to move by Reason's sure Compass, or steer the steady Course of Virtue.

But I hope the Description I have given of those dangerous Shelves and Rocks, that lie in their Way, will teach them to be so much the more cautious, and help to prevent their *making Shipwreck of Faith or a good Conscience*. For notwithstanding all the Cunning and Plausibility of the Seducers, I may still lay it down for certain, in the third and last Place,

*Thirdly*, That there were Reasons and Motives always sufficient to determine any considerate



considerate Man, against yielding to their Solicitations, or Importunities: And these Reasons and Motives are such as do not lie very deep or remote: They are obvious enough to the Notice of every Man that is Master of any Consideration; and they will have their Weight too, when considered, with all who have a good Conscience, and are willing to live honestly, and square their Actions according to their Principles.

So that blessed be God, though the Contagion of evil Counsels and evil Examples be very apt to spread; yet there is always a powerful Antidote at hand, that (if duly applied) will preserve both our Faith and Manners pure and untainted: And it will be worth our while to try the useful Experiment in the several Cases aforementioned.

And *First*, If any *atheistical* Pretender should go about to unsettle the Belief, or perplex the Notion of a God, with his *Philosophical Jargon*; or more covertly undermine it by indirect Insinuations and Opinions not consistent with it, this needs not stagger even the weakest Believer: For that Cause may be brought to a very short Issue. Let the Pretender only be called upon to prove his

SER. III.  bold Negative; let him demonstrate that there is no God, and that 'tis impossible there should be one; if this be found too hard a Task for him, as sure enough it will, let him account next, if he can, for the very unequal Hazard that he runs, in adventuring to deny what he can never disprove.

For if there were no God, what is it that would be gained by it? Nothing but a Freedom from the Restraints of Conscience and Religion, which no wise Man would reckon a Burden; and perhaps from some few temporal Inconveniences (tho' that's very questionable too) which would terminate with a short Life. But if there is a God (which the *Atheist* himself can never deny to be possible) infinite must the Loss be to such as impiously renounce him, no less than of Heaven, and the endless Glory and Happiness thereof; and infinite and irreparable the Mischief sustained, in the everlasting Torments of Hell Fire: And upon such a prodigious Inequality as this, no reasonable Man sure can be tempted to turn *Atheist*.

Nor does the *Deist* come much better appointed, when he would persuade them to reject all *divine Revelation*, for want of sufficient

ent Evidence, or because of the unintelligible Mysteries imposed upon the Understanding of the simple Believer. For even the simplest Believer might demand of this *sceptical* Disputer, whether, if there were a Revelation from God (the Possibility of which he will not dare to deny) it could be better evidenced and attested, than that which we call the *Gospel Revelation* is? Or what better Evidence he could insist upon, unless it were a Degree of it so dazzling bright, as would perfectly force our Assent, and leave no room for the Trial of our Ingenuity and Docibility? And if *Mysteries* choak his Belief, it may well be demanded, how he comes to believe a God, whose Being and Attributes are as full of Mystery, and as hard to be understood and comprehended as any thing in *revealed Religion*.

Such Objections therefore must be of little Force, that turn so directly upon the Objector himself. And 'tis sufficient for the *Christian*, when he is urged to turn *Deist*, to ask the *Deist*, why he does not profess himself an *Atheist*? For that it may be suspected he is at the Bottom; to that at least his Principles manifestly carry him.

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Again, when the *Heretick* pretends a great Reverence for Scripture, and yet industriously sets himself to pervert, or rather expunge some of the most explicit Doctrines contained in it, such as the Divinity of *Christ*, and his being a Propitiation for our Sins: I say, let this subtle *Heretick* be only asked, what fixed Rule he would go by in interpreting Scripture? For if those Doctrines, which he is not willing to embrace, were never so true, and never so certainly contained in Scripture, yet they could not be more intelligibly, more plainly and fully delivered than now they are, when he will needs suppose them to be false. And 'tis strange, that in a *Divine Revelation* (which he will own the Scripture to be) God's Mind should be so expressed, as to confound Truth and Falshood; 'tis strange, that in order to come at the Truth, clouded with so much Obscurity, the most easy and obvious, the most usual and natural Meaning must be set aside, to make Way for the most remote, improper, and violent Construction that can be put upon Words.

At this Rate, Men may declare, that they believe the Scripture, and yet believe nothing of the *Christian* Faith. At this Rate the



whole Creed is in Danger : The Creation of <sup>SER. III.</sup> the World may vanish into *Metaphor*, as well as any other of their Articles, and the Humanity of our Saviour may be disproved, as well as his Divinity, as some very learned Persons have acutely observed (*vide Stillingfleet and Sherlock.*) The *Heretick* therefore should be put in Mind, that it must be highly provoking in the Sight of God, to give such Scope to the Wantonness of Invention, and to wrest and torture the Scripture so unmercifully. And every sober *Christian* must needs take just Offence, to see the Rule of Faith reduced to so much Uncertainty, and to be argued out of it, against all Sense and Reason.

Hitherto then our Principles stand firm and unshaken, notwithstanding all the vain Attempts of such Seducers ; and the Raille-ry of the Scoffer can never affect us. Every pious and modest Ear will indeed be offend-  
ed at his impudent Profaneness ; but a Man would sooner chuse to imitate the Rants and Ravings of a *Bedlam*, than the worse Extravagances of such a *witless Desperado*. He should be only asked, when he so daringly affronts the Almighty, *Canst thou thunder too*

SER. III. *with a Voice like him?* and answered, as the Archangel did the Devil, *the Lord rebuke thee, the Lord rebuke thee.*

And I reckon 'tis but another Dress for Profaneness, and that immodest enough too, when Men speak contemptuously of the spiritual Power, as well as the Persons of God's Ministers, and of the most solemn Offices of Religion too; alledging, that they might be as effectually administer'd by any other unhallowed Hand, if the civil Magistrate should so prescribe. It may suffice, only to demand of the bold *Innovators*, whether Christ did not commit some spiritual Authority to his *Apostles* at first? And whether it was not necessary that a competent Share of that spiritual Authority should be delegated to others after them, in order to propagate and perpetuate his Religion in the World? And whether that Promise, *Lo, I will be with you always to the End of the World*, can be made good, without supposing a standing Order of Men to succeed the *Apostles*, in the ordinary Part of their Ministry and Office. In the mean Time, it is a sufficient Prejudice against all the Arguments that they offer to the contrary, that they

they are Weapons borrowed out of *Hobbs's* Armory: And it may well beget Wonder and Abhorrence in all serious Persons, that professed *Christians* should talk so slightly of *Christianity*, and affect to argue like downright *Infidels*.

And as there is no Cause that we should resign our Principles to such perverse and loose kind of Arguers; so there can be none to part with our Innocence, at the Persuasion of any licentious or disorderly Companion. For when such Persons invite others to take part with them in their voluptuous Excesses, they need only be questioned, whether they believe a Heaven or Hell or no? If they don't, they are then in the *Atheist's* Form, and as much at a Loss as he, to secure themselves against the Possibility of what they are not willing to believe. But if they do believe a future State of Happiness or Misery, it is the most unreasonable piece of Folly and Madness to indulge themselves in, or entice others to such wicked Practices as will certainly exclude them from the Happiness of Heaven, and consign them over to inevitable and everlasting Misery: It would be more tolerable in an *Epicurean*, because more con-

SER. III. *~* sistent with his Opinion (however groundless that Opinion may be) to say, *let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.* But it would sound monstrously to hear it out of a *Christian's* Mouth, *let us eat and drink,* for we must live for ever, nay and be damned for it too to all Eternity. Such an Invitation as this, were it proposed in a naked View, would carry more of Horror than Allurement; and serve rather to awaken the stupid, than ensnare the unwary.

Lastly, if any *Empyrick* in *Religion* should undertake to shew a less rugged and difficult, a more expeditious and compendious Way to Heaven, by discovering how Sinners may be accepted of God, without being truly penitent, without actual Amendment; or how they may make out a Title to God's Mercy, without any Foundation for it in his Promise.

To all such vain Undertakers, it need only be said, that there are no other Means or Terms of Salvation to be relied on, but those that are plainly and explicitly offered to us in the Gospel; and if that extraordinary Method which they recommend be there to be found, well and good; if not,  
that



that it will be unsafe to make an uncertain Experiment in a Concern of so great Moment ; infinitely hazardous to venture our Souls a Voyage into an unknown Eternity, upon so slender and crazy a Bottom, as that of any human Invention.

And by this Time I hope it appears, upon a Re-examination of the Instances aforegiven (and it will hold equally in all other Cases) that there are Reasons and Motives at hand, always sufficient to determine any considerate Man against yielding to the Solicitations of those who go about to pervert his Principles, or corrupt his Morals.

I shall beg leave only to shut up this Discourse with a Word or two of general Advice ; which, if observed, will be of perpetual Use to us, in guarding against all the Designs and Attempts of such as would betray us into Sin.

*First* then, since the Number of these Seducers is so great, and their Examples and Counsels so pernicious, let us take Care to avoid their Company all that is possible. Avoid it wholly indeed we cannot, unless we should retire into the Desert, to converse with the more innocent Beasts of Prey,

SER. III. Prey, which devour only the Bodies of Men, and that's all they can do: But these are the Devourers and Destroyers of Souls, whose Bite is more deadly than that of the most venomous Serpent; which should be Caution enough, one would think, not to approach too near them, never to be sure to enter into a Familiarity, or so much as frequently associating with them; for they will infuse their Venom by some sudden and insensible Conveyance. The Appearance of their good Humour, or the Gaity of their Wit, will be so plausible a Cover for their Wickedness, that we shall be apt to forget that there is any Harm under it, and by Degrees become reconciled to it, and become as good Proficients as those that were our Teachers. And this Caution is more necessary to Youth, because their want of Experience, and the Warmth of their Blood and Passions, makes them the easier Prey to those that lie in wait to ensnare them. Let them therefore take heed above all Things of contracting any Friendship with Men that are *debauched* in *Principle* or *Practice*; and let every innocent Soul, as he values his Innocence and his

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his Safety, resolve, and beg of God to se-  
cond the good Resolutions, never to enter  
into their Secret, nor to be united to their  
Assemblies; for their Feet go down to Death,  
and their Steps take hold of Hell.

Secondly, In order to keep the stricter  
Guard upon our own Innocence, let us en-  
deavour to preserve an awful Sense of God's  
Holiness, and Justice, and Power, and Pre-  
sence, and his last proceeding to Judgment,  
constantly in our Minds; for this will be  
a sufficient Defence against all the Assaults  
and Stratagems of *Satan* and his Instru-  
ments, let them be never so well laid and  
concerted. When therefore we are in our  
private Retirements, secluded from the Ob-  
servation of the World; if any Tempter  
should invade our Privacies, or any sinful  
Thought or Purpose intrude it self, let us  
remember, that the Eye of God is conti-  
nually upon us, an Eye too piercing to  
overlook any Iniquity, and yet too pure to  
behold it with Approbation, or to suffer it  
to go unpunished: And this will arm us  
with the same Resolution, to repel the  
Temptation with the Words with which  
*Joseph* resisted the unchaste Solicitations of  
his

SER. III. his Mistress, saying, *how can I do this great Wickedness, and sin against God?* (Gen. xxxix.

9.) And the same will be our Preservative too in all our publick Converse with the World, and all the Business and Entertainments of human Life. For whilst we are encompassed with Vanities on all Hands, and by the Instigation of our own fleshly Lusts at home, as well as the Example and Enticement of others from abroad, perpetually solicited to take our Share of them, let us only bear in Mind that there is a just and impartial Judge, who will one Day call us to a strict Account for all our Actions; and *that* will give a very powerful Check to every irregular Desire, or unreasonable Gratification: In particular it will be a great Allay to the Fervour of Youth, and that Fondness for Liberty, which is apt to slide into Licentiousness; if those of that Age would remember to use their Freedom and pursue their Enjoyments only within those Bounds, and with that Prospect which the wise Man sets before their Eyes, in that grave Memento: *Rejoice, O young Man, in thy Youth, and let thy Heart cheer thee in the Days of thy*



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*thy Youth, and walk in the Way of thy Heart, SER. III.  
and in the Sight of thine Eyes; but know thou,  
that for all these Things God will bring thee  
into Judgment. Ecclesiast. xi. 9.*

And in the Day of Judgment the Lord in his Mercy deliver us all, both young and old, through the Merits and Mediation of Christ Jesus our Lord; to whom, with the Father and Holy Spirit, be ascribed, as is due, all Praise, Glory, Might, Majesty and Dominion, now, henceforth, and for evermore. *Amen.*



S E R-





## S E R M O N IV.

The Danger of being Partakers of  
other Mens Sins.



1 Ep. TIM. v. 22.

*Lay Hands suddenly on no Man, nei-  
ther be Partaker of other Mens  
Sins : Keep thy self pure.*

**A**Midst all the Benefits and Blessings of SER. IV. Society, this fatal Abuse of it springs out of our depraved Nature, and mingles itself but too much in our daily Communication, that Men of corrupt Minds are apt to associate in Evil, and by their joint Endeavours to promote the Growth of Wick- edness in the World, and to encrease each other's Guilt and Condemnation.

And

SER. IV. And this is what creeps so insensibly into  
 ~~~~~ all our Intercourse and Conversation with  
 each other, that we cannot be too cautious
 or watchful to avoid it.

For if we consider the various Relations
 that we bear to one another, as Superiors,
 Equals, and Inferiors ; and the social Duties
 thence arising ; we shall be convinced, that
 there are social Sins too ; and that one Man
 may have Fellowship with another in his Sin,
 and be a Sharer in the Guilt, either as princi-
 pal or accessory, directly or indirectly, by
 some positive Act of his own, or by the
 Omission of something that he might and
 ought to have done.

And if so, 'tis plain no Man can keep
 himself pure ; that is, preserve his Innocence
 entire, by regarding himself and his own
 Actions, singly and apart from the rest of
 Mankind : But he ought carefully to confi-
 der what Influence his Behaviour is likely to
 have upon others, to whom he stands re-
 lated, or with whom he is concerned ; lest
 whilst he impartially acquits himself of all
 Blame, he should be *Partaker of other Mens*
Sins ; and that too (for so it sometimes hap-
 pens) in an equal if not greater Degree of
 Guilt

Guilt than that of the immediate Actors ^{SER. IV.} themselves; that therefore we may be the better prepared to maintain a sufficient Guard upon our own Innocence, I shall,

First, Briefly shew upon what Ground or Reason the Guilt of one Man's Sin may be imputed to another. And

Secondly, I shall instance in the various Ways by which Men do too commonly render themselves liable to this Imputation; which may serve as so many *Sea-Marks* to us, to prevent our making *Shipwreck* of a good Conscience. And

First, I shall briefly shew upon what Ground or Reason the Guilt of one Man's Sin may be imputed to another.

Now every Effect is justly imputable to a Man, of which he is the moral Cause. And a Man is truly esteemed the moral Cause of any Effect that proceedeth from him, as a free Agent, either in whole or in part, immediately or solely by himself, or by the Mediation of, or in Conjunction with another.

And because one Man's Will may be freely consenting, or concurring, or his executive

SER. IV. Powers assisting to another Man's Actions, therefore the Good or Evil of such Actions may be reasonably imputed to him that is so concurring or assisting; and he entitles himself to a Share of the Praise or Dispraise, the Reward or Punishment thereunto belonging.

When therefore any Man urges another to commit Wickedness, by commanding, threatening or awing; or draws him to it by enticing and persuading; or abets him by Encouragement, or ministers to him by his Compliance or Assistance, or confirms him in it, by applauding, justifying, or palliating the Fact; in a Word, in what Manner; and in what Degree soever he contributes towards the Commission of Sin by another, in the same Degree the Guilt of that Sin is imputable to himself: And the true Reason is, because he appears to have either his Hand or his Heart in it, or perhaps both; he is manifestly in some Measure or other the moral Cause of it, and therefore is justly accountable for it to God, if not to Man. And this may suffice to satisfy us in brief, upon what Ground or Reason the Guilt of one Man's Sin may be imputed to another.

Secondly,

Secondly, My Business is in the next Place SER. IV.
to instance more particularly in the various
Ways, by which Men do too commonly render
themselves liable to this Imputation, which
may serve as so many *Sea-Marks* to prevent
our making Shipwreck of a good Conscience.

1st, And the first Way by which Men
may derive the Imputation of other Mens
Sins upon themselves, is when by meer dint
of Authority they force or awe them into a
Compliance with any Wickedness.

And this is a Charge that lies against
Magistrates, Parents, or Masters, when upon
Pain of their severest Displeasure they require
the Obedience of those that are subject to
them, in any unlawful Matter: In which
Case they deserve to be accounted not *Parties*,
but *Principals* in the Sin: For they are much
more guilty than those who tamely and timorously
comply with them; because they act altogether
free and unconstrained; the wicked Intention
is wholly their own, and their Commands are
armed with Power, which is apt to strike a
Terror upon those that are in Subjection;
and that may be allowed to extenuate, tho' it
cannot totally excuse their sinful Compliance.

SER. IV. Thus in the Murder of *Uriah*, the Guilt of innocent Blood lies principally at *David's* Door, who deliberately and maliciously contrived it; even more than at *Joab's*, who was so wicked indeed as to execute the bloody Command; but it was because he was too willing to gratify, or too fearful of offending a Prince, from whom he had received many Favours and Honours.

So if a Father should threaten with an Oath, to disinherit his Son, unless he will renounce the true Religion; the Son 'tis true wrongs his Conscience greatly, in suffering himself to be prevailed upon; but yet the Father has as deep, if not a deeper Share in the Guilt for laying him under so strong a Temptation, and driving him to the wretched Choice of being either an *Apostate*, a *Hypocrite*, or a *Beggar*.

Thus when a Master, by terrible Threats, or fine Promises, tempts his Servant to be his Instrument in any thing that is unjust or wicked, the Injury and Wickedness is originally and chiefly to be charged upon the Master, that uses such powerful Methods to corrupt a poor Servant's Honesty, and makes Innocence both criminal and penal.

But

But the most notorious Abuse of Power SER. IV.
is, in this Kind, when Governors impose
their unlawful Commands under the Forma-
lity of the Law, and enforce them by severe
Penalties, such as may induce the Subjects
to sacrifice their Duty to their Interest, and
to *obey Man rather than God*. And in this
Case the Guilt of the unhappy Compliers is
directly chargeable upon the cruel Imposers,
who by the worst Sort of Tyranny do en-
force Wickedness as a legal Duty. And
therefore *Jeroboam*, who according to what
he had *devised in his own Heart*, (as the Text
has it, 1 Kings xii. 33.) *ordained a Feast* un-
to the Children of *Israel*, that they might
offer Incense to the Calves that he had made,
is loaded with the Guilt of the Peoples Idola-
try, as well as his own; and bears it as his
Character upon Record, *that he made Israel*
to sin (1 Kings xv. 30.) *by his Provocation*
wherewith he provoked the Lord God of Israel
to Anger. And doubtless it is a Pitch of sin-
ning that is very provoking in the Sight
of God, when Governours set themselves
thus to be *Taskmasters* (as it were) for the
Devil: For he has pronounced Woe against
them by the Prophet *Isaiab* (Chap. x. 1.)

SER. IV. *Woe unto them that decree unrighteous Decrees, and that write Grievousness which they have prescribed.* That is, gave the Sanction of Law to any Iniquity.

2dly, Men may render themselves Partakers of the Sins of others, by neglecting to restrain or punish them, as they deserve, when their Station requires, and their Power enables them so to do. And this also is what nearly affects Parents and Governours, and all that are in Authority.

For the Authority they have is a Trust from God, designed to be subservient to his Providence in the good Government of the World; which Trust they manifestly violate, when through Remissness, or Connivance, or a culpable Lenity, they suffer licentious Wickedness to reign with Impunity.

And this very Wickedness which they suffer thus to go unpunished in others, is justly to be charged to their own Account; because it is the Hope of Impunity that emboldens them to commit it; and it might probably be prevented or suppressed by a just and seasonable Severity. And therefore in God's righteous Judgments, he that spares the Sinner, when he might and should chastise him,
passes

passes for a Promoter of the Sin, and should be punished for it. For we find he judged *Eli*, as well as his *House*, for the Iniquity which he knew, because his Sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not (1 Sam. iii. 13.) Conscious he was of their great Sin and Scandal, and through Indulgence connived at it, and therefore he shared both in the Guilt and Punishment. His Sons were slain, he brake his Neck, and a Curse remained upon his Family for ever, not to be expiated by any Sacrifice. A terrible Example to all Parents, who fondly indulge their Children in their Faults, and by Sufferance encourage them to be wicked. But as *Eli* was a Judge, as well as a Parent, so this Charge lies heaviest upon those who are intrusted with the Reins of publick Government, when they neglect to make such wholesome Laws as are wanting for the Correction and Suppression of Irreligion and Immorality, and relax and enervate the Force of the Laws that are in Being, by taking no Care to put them duly in Execution; which is in Effect to proclaim that Indemnity to Sinners, of which they for their Part never neglect to take the Privilege.

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And they also are extremely blame-worthy in this Regard, who though they have no Authority to punish Vice, by any temporal Method of Coercion, yet are empowered to inflict spiritual Censures, and to deter People from it, by the Denunciation of God's dreadful Threatnings. And by the Way, they in particular have much, very much to answer for on this Head, who by unreasonably opposing the Authority of the Church, and causelessly breaking Communion with it, have so far weakned its Discipline, as to bring it into Contempt; much more they who impiously go about to dispute it into nothing.

But still the *Ministers* and *Pastors* of the Church are authorized Reprovers, and they ought to rebuke Sin boldly, even when 'tis too stout to be punished: They are constituted *publick Watchmen*; and they ought constantly *to watch for the Souls of their Flock, as those that must give an Account.* (Heb. xiii. 17.) And if through Fear, or base Compli-
 ance, or the Prospect of Advantage, or any other corrupt Motive, they forbear to warn the People of their Sins, or to give Check to growing Wickedness, they are in a great Measure answerable for its Encrease and Progress;

gress; and when they are so backward to lend their Hand to stop the Breach in the Bank, they must expect to be swept away in the general Inundation: They must perish together with those Souls, whom they have suffered to perish thro' their Neglect, and be accountable to God for the Loss of their Souls. According to the Tenour of the Prophet *Ezekiel's* Commission, (which is also every ordinary Pastor's Trust) *Son of Man, I have made thee a Watchman unto the House of Israel; therefore bear the Word at my Mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the Wicked, thou shalt surely die: If thou givest him not Warning, nor speakest to warn the Wicked from his wicked Way—that wicked Man shall die in his Iniquity: But his Blood will I require at thy Hand.* (Ezek. iii. 17, 18.)

3dly, They are certainly Partners in the Guilt of any Sin, who join as Accomplices in the Fact; for this implies not only their full Consent to it, but their actual Concurrence in it, and makes it their own Act.

Thus they who furnish a common Stock to carry on some wicked Design are all Confederates in the Wickedness, and equally answerable for the Mischief or Damage.

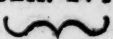
Thus

SER. IV. Thus he that *consents to a Thief* (as the *Psalmist* speaks, *Psal.* l. 18.) either by directing or assisting him in the Attempt, or by harbouring and hiding him from Justice afterwards, or by dividing the Spoils with him, or concealing, or converting, or disposing of the stolen Goods for him; he I say that is thus consenting with a Thief, is plainly guilty of the Theft; which could not have been so safely, or so successfully committed without him.

So likewise, he that is *Partaker with the Adulterer*, in furthering his lewd Intrigues, or shaping out the Way, or finding the Opportunity for him to accomplish his sinful Desire, is manifestly his Assistant in the Sin, and therefore his Companion too in the Guilt.

So all they that are concerned together in a Riot, if any body happens to be murdered in the Fray, are guilty of the Blood as well as the Man that gave the fatal Stroke.

So to name no more, they who are wickedly industrious in fomenting Sedition, or stirring up Rebellion, are all chargeable with all the Bloodshed, Rapine, and Confusion that follow. Even those whose Part it was only

to counsel or abet, without once drawing the SER. IV.
Sword, or offering any direct Violence. 

4^{thly}, They are undoubtedly large Partakers in the Guilt of other Mens Sins, who solicit, entice, or seduce them into evil Courses. For Persons that are weak and frail, may by repeated Solicitations, or proper Allurements, in Time be won over, and brought to commit the Sin, that they at first abhorred; and Persons that are ignorant, may by Pretext and Artifice be drawn into a sinful Error, which by a fair Representation, they would shun and hate. But then it's evident, that they are more than equal Sharers in the Guilt, who ply such Persons with Importunity; or delude them with some agreeable Charm in that one Case, or put the Fallacy upon their Understanding in the other.

Thus our Mother *Eve*, after she had tasted the Delicousness of the *forbidden Fruit*, whose Beauty had courted her Eye, and invited her Curiosity, tempted *Adam* to share in the deceitful Pleasure, and therefore the Sentence was denounced against her first, as being first and deepest in the Transgression.

And

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And as the Wickedness of *Abab* is represented to be very exorbitant, and beyond Example; so the Text does him the Justice to inform us, that *Jezebel, his Wife, stirred him up to it.* And therefore she was his fellow Sufferer in the Punishment, as she was Partaker of his Sin, *for the Dogs ate her Flesh, as they licked his Blood;* and the Son *Joram* was involved in the Curse, *because the Whoredoms of his Mother Jezebel and her Witchcrafts were so many.*

Thus the subtle *Priests* in the Church of *Rome*, are justly to be taxed for the Idolatry and Superstition that corrupts their Worship, because they lead the People into it, by solemn Amusements, and confirm them in it, by fallacious Sophistry.

Thus they who are at the Head of the Separation among our selves, are answerable for all the Mischiefs of *Schism*; in that they are willing to prepossess People, that 'tis unlawful to communicate with us, or ready to draw them aside under the Pretext of *better Edification*; or perhaps very artificial in painting over the Sin of *Schism* with specious Colours, that shall render it next to nothing.

So again those profane Wits, who take
Pains

Pains to unsettle the Principles of all Religion, SER. VI.
and to furnish those that are young and raw
with plausible Cavils against *Christianity*,
may deservedly be accounted the Propagators
of *Irreligion* and *Atheism*, which could never
obtain in the World, unless when tricked
up in a Dress, that flatters the Reason, as
well as it gratifies the Inclinations of Man-
kind.

But none are more heinously guilty in this
Respect, than *false Guides* and *false Teachers*,
they whose *Lips should preserve Knowledge*,
and convey sound Instructions; when they
handle the Word of God deceitfully, and in-
dustriously teach false Doctrines; when they
*put Darkness for Light, and Light for Dark-
ness*, and thereby mislead the People into
pernicious Errors; and discharge them from
their Duty by cunning Evasions, or confirm
them in their Sin by palliating Excuses and
Pretences; they are then the Murderers of
Souls, and derive the whole Load of the
People's Sins upon themselves; they shall
not be so much as *the least in the Kingdom of
Heaven*; they shall rather be the greatest in
the Kingdom of Darkness, for which they
are such industrious Agents.

5thly,

SER. IV. 5^{thly}, They partake of other Mens Sins, who either minister Occasion, or are in any wise subservient to them.

The first of which is the very Case of the Text ; for the *Apostle's* Direction to *Timothy* is ; *Lay Hands suddenly on no Man : Be not Partaker of other Mens Sins* : Implying, that he would certainly be so, if he should admit any to the Office and Work of the Ministry, without carefully examining into his Qualifications. For 'tis plain, that he who is careless in so important a Trust, renders himself accountable for the future Miscarriages of the Person whom he unworthily ordains ; as well as for the Scandal and Detriment that may accrue to the Church of God ; all which might have been prevented, by using the necessary Care, and therefore it deserved to be imputed to the *Ordainer's* Neglect, that made Way for it, and administered the Occasion.

Neither are they to be acquitted who act as subordinate Instruments to others in their Sins. For the Awe or Influence of a Master or Superior, tho' it may be some Extenuation, can be no sufficient Apology for such servile Compliance. For as they are the Lord's

Freemen,

Partakers of other Mens Sins.

III

Freemen, they ought to be no Man's Servants^{SER. IV.} in a wicked Thing; they cannot indeed without defiling themselves with the Wickedness, of which they submit to be made the Tools: And therefore the Character of those *Profligates* is justly accounted the most infamous, as their Drudgery is of all others the vilest, who mercenarily employ themselves to make Provision for, and fulfil the Lusts of other Men.

6^{thly}, They have a Share also in other Mens Sins, who though they had no hand in the Commission of them, yet can find in their Hearts to pass their Approbation afterwards. For if we ought to *have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness, but rather reprove them*; then certainly to approve (instead of reproof) must make us the deeper Partakers with them. And in Strictness (*Quid interest inter Suasorem Facti, & Probatorem?*) What Odds between the Man that persuades to the Fact, and him that applauds it? What indeed betwixt him that does it, and him that takes Complacency in it, when done?

The immediate Actor, it may be presumed, was under the Hurry of Passion, or the Power

SER. IV. Power of some very great Temptation, when he committed the sinful Fact: But he that comes in with his Approbation afterwards, is a professed Defender of it, and declares his deliberate Judgment to be for it: And in so doing, he betrays so much Malice and Malignity of Heart, that he can plead no Infirmary in Excuse or Abatement of his Fault: Besides he countenances and encourages the Sinner to continue in his Sin, and repeat it, and therefore he is a Sharer with him in it, and takes part aforehand too with all those that shall happen to do likewise.

In a Word, as it was the Effect of the greatest Degeneracy and Corruption of Manners among the *Romans* in Saint *Paul's* Time, that not contented to be wicked alone, they had Pleasure also in those that were so: So it must argue a strange Depravity of Mind, for any Man thus to turn *Advocate* for *Satan*, and to justify the Sin that he did not act himself, lest he should seem to have no Part nor Concern in it.

7thly, and Lastly, they are Partakers of other Mens Sins, who occasion their Fall by the Scandal of ill Example; for all ill Examples are so many Stumbling-Blocks in the

way of the weak or unwary : And corrupt Nature is always prone to Imitation, and glad of a *Precedent* for any Wickedness : And as the Contagion of Sin is apt to spread very fast, so the bad Examples of those Men infect most and soonest, who by their Office and Profession should know and practise better Things.

When Magistrates, whose Care it ought to be to oblige others to a religious Observation of the Laws, are themselves the most notorious Transgressors of them ; when the Conversation of Ministers, that should be well *seasoned with Salt*, to preserve themselves and others from Corruption, is in it self rotten, offensive, and infectious ; I say when such Men as these are the Leaders, it gives a Sort of Warrant or Licence, but to be sure, too much Encouragement to all who have a Mind to be their Followers in Wickedness ; especially when Men who have acquired an eminent Character for Wisdom and Goodness, fall into any Vice or Error, that blinds the Judgment and ensnares the Consciences of their implicate Adherents, and deluded Admirers : That gives a sort of Reputation to the Sin

SER. IV. that comes so well recommended, and creates a Veneration for it in the Minds of the People; who are either incapable of examining at all, or else strongly prepossess'd, that they must needs be safe in following such excellent Patterns, and that they can do no otherwise than well, in taking those for their Guides, of whom they cannot suspect any Evil.

And thus the Fall of such Men ruins Multitudes, besides themselves, which must needs accumulate a great deal of Guilt upon their Heads, and treasure up Vengeance for them against the last Day.

And thus I have recounted to you most of the various Ways, by which Men so commonly derive the Imputation of others Sins upon themselves, which may serve as so many *Sea-Marks* to us, to prevent our *making Shipwreck of a good Conscience*.

For what remains, I shall only make a brief Observation or two, in order to Practice, and so conclude.

1st, The first concerns the Ministers of God, and the regard the People ought to pay to them, when they faithfully and impartially discharge their Duty; for they are,

Partakers of other Mens Sins.

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SER. IV.

as I had Occasion to observe to you above, *authorised Reprovers*: They are *Watchmen* over the Souls of their Flock; and it is their indispensable Duty as such, to warn Men of their Sins, and to remind them of all Things that they have received in Command from God. These necessary Truths they must declare, though they should happen to be never so unpalatable, or unwelcome to their Hearers: They must preach up Doctrines that are not gratifying to Flesh and Blood, nor perhaps easy to be reconciled to secular Interest or Policy; they must preach down the most fashionable Errors, and the most profitable Vices; the People are only to be intreated that they would listen to the Word of God with Fear and Reverence, and desire it in Sincerity, and obey it without Partiality.

But *whether they will bear, or whether they will forbear*, the Ministers *must take heed to themselves, and to their Doctrine*; these Things they must *speake and exhort*, and *rebuke with all Authority*. And no Man sure will despise them, no Man can blame them, because they are afraid of *partaking in other Mens Sins*, because they dare not in-

SER. IV. cur the Danger of being damned with them,
 ~~~~~ and for them.

2dly, The second Observation concerns us all in general; it is, that since there are so many various Ways of involving our selves in other Mens Sins; that we should look well to our Feet, and *walk circumspectly, not as Fools, but as wise*; and that we should take special Heed, since the Days are so evil, we do not make them much worse, by contributing to the Propagation and Increase of Wickedness in the World, and make our own Condemnation the sorer too, by adding other Mens Faults to our own proper Account: For what Pleasure soever those Companions in Vice may take in each other's Conversation now, the Society of the Damned in Hell must needs be very uncomfortable, when all their Complacency shall be turned into mutual Reproaches, and bitter Accusations, and Execrations of the Son against the Father, and the Daughter against the Mother, of Brother against Brother, and Friend against Friend, saying, it is through your wicked Enticement, through your cursed Example, that I am come into this Place; it is through  
 your



your Means that I am doomed to everlasting <sup>SER. IV.</sup>  
Misery. From which dismal State, God of  
his infinite Mercy deliver us all, in and thro'  
Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom, with the  
Father and Holy Spirit, be ascribed, as is  
due, all Praise, Glory, Might, Majesty and  
Dominion, now, henceforth, and for ever-  
more. *Amen.*



17. *Parables of the Kingdom*

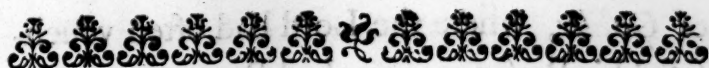
Jesus said to his disciples, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. As he slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat. When the wheat sprang up, the tares also grew. The wheat and the tares grew together until the harvest. At that time the Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all that offend him and all who do lawless deeds. They will be thrown into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. Amen."

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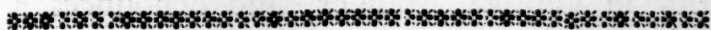
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## S E R M O N V.

God's different Dispensations of Religious Light consider'd.



MATTHEW XI. 21, 22.

*Woe unto thee Chorazin, Woe unto thee Bethsaida: For if the mighty Works which have been done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in Sackcloth and Ashes.*

*But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Day of Judgment than for you.*

**T**H E S E solemn Words of the blessed SERM.V.  
*Jesus* were at once a severe Upbraid-  
 ing and Threatning to the Inhabi-  
 tants of *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida*, two Cities

SERM. V. of *Galilee*, where the Lord had often vouchsafed his Presence, preached Repentance, and confirmed his heavenly Doctrine with *mighty Signs and Wonders*; but all without any Effect upon an obstinate and obdurate People,

Seeing therefore that they cared for none of these Things, he makes use of his Authority in another Manner, and denounces a terrible *Woe* against them, for thus wilfully rejecting the Counsel of God, and the Word of Salvation so kindly sent home to them, The Contempt of which was a Provocation of that Size, that it rendered their Condition worse, and their final Account much heavier than that of their Neighbours, of *Tyre* and *Sidon*; whom they 'tis like (according to their usual Charity) looked upon with a scornful Eye, as being Strangers to the Covenant of God, profane Persons, and Idolaters.

But whatever they were, they were not guilty of so much Disingenuity and Perverseness as themselves; because they were Strangers to the Person and Doctrine of *Christ*, and had not the Opportunity of being Eye-Witnesses to his Miracles. And therefore he that *knew the Hearts* of both (though he had

as



as yet made Proof but of one) he that was <sup>SERM.V.</sup> finally to be the Judge of both, decides it afore-hand, in Favour of the more ingenuous *Heathens*, against the incredulous *Jews*. *But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the Day of Judgment than for you.*

And this is recorded not only as a just Sentence, as well as lasting Reproach upon the Infidelity and Impenitency of that Age, or People, who were first concerned in it. But 'tis a standing Declaration against the same in all succeeding Generations; it is written for the Instruction, Admonition, and Caution of all to whom this Gospel shall be preached.

And I shall now offer to your Thoughts some Considerations of Weight, that are plainly suggested from the Text. And

*First*, The first Thing I would propose to be considered is, that God, *the Father of Lights*, hath, in his all-wise Providence, thought fit to send out his Light and Truth; *i. e.* to dispense the Means of Knowledge and Salvation in different Measures and Degrees, to different People and Generations of Men. And it is to be considered, *Secondly*,

SERM.V.

*Secondly*, That the same Means of Grace and Knowledge, in the same Measure and Degree, will operate differently upon Men of different Tempers and Dispositions. But it must be observed,

*Thirdly*, That all People are strictly accountable to God for that Proportion of Light and Truth which he hath been pleased to afford them; and therefore it must also be concluded,

*Fourthly*, That they are liable to the greater Punishment in Proportion, who have resisted the strongest Evidence, and sinned against the clearest Light.

*First*, The first Thing then I propose to be considered is, that God the *Father of Lights* hath in his all-wise Providence thought fit to send out his Light and Truth; *i. e.* to dispense the Means of Knowledge and Salvation in different Measures and Degrees, to different People and Generations of Men.

And so it was from the Beginning; God created Man at first *after his own Image*, with the brightest natural Notices, and the plainest and liveliest Impressions, to guide him into his Duty, and with Strength of Mind, and Steadiness

Steadiness of Will, sufficient to carry him SERM. V.  
through it too, had it not been for his own  
wilful Default: But he soon stumbled, and  
shamefully fell into a Transgression of the  
only positive Command that God had laid  
upon him; and this Fall derived a strange  
Weakness and Blindness upon all his sinful  
Race.

But God in his abundant Pity did immediately upon the Fall revive his languishing Hopes with the Promise of a Saviour, that should restore his lapsed Nature, and redeem him from the Bondage of Death and Hell.

And in Compassion to human Infirmities, so unhappily propagated from our first Parents, he vouchsafed also to supply the Defect of natural Light, now grown faint and dim, by personal Communications, and other extraordinary Notifications of his own blessed Will, which were frequent in the earliest Times.

And when notwithstanding such immediate Directions, the rebellious Sons of *Adam* degenerated into the grossest Sensualities and Idolatries; he enter'd into special Covenant with *Abraham*, him he constituted the *Father of the Faithful*, and his Children the  
*Heirs*

SERM. V. *Heirs of the Promise, as knowing* (for so God himself is pleased to bear him Witness, Gen. xviii. 19.) *that he would command his Children and his Household after him, to keep the Way of the Lord, and to do Justice and Judgment.* All which he most punctually observed.

And this traditionary Knowledge of the one true God, his Worship, and his Will (not excluding what was more particularly signified to them in Visions and Dreams) was the ordinary and standing Light afforded to the *Patriarchal Age*.

Afterwards, God was pleased to make the People descended from *Abraham*, his own strict Enclosure, and to take them into his own Nurture and Government, by the Institution of a written Law, moral, civil, and ritual, with many Types and Figures interwoven, decyphering the *Messiah*: But this Law was not promulged to the rest of the World, it was known only to those few of the *Gentiles*, who happened to sojourn among the *Jews*, or had Commerce with them; and of those but few too (comparatively) were let into the true Understanding of it, or became hearty *Profelytes* to it.



In Process of Time, when this written SERM.V.  
Law came to be too much neglected and  
violated, and the primary Intention of it mi-  
serably mistaken, or perverted, by a carnal  
minded People, God sent forth his *Prophets*,  
partly to stir them up to the Practice of sincere  
Piety and sound Morality, both which were  
almost lost under the Formalities of Ceremo-  
ny, and partly to quicken their Expectation  
of that *great Prophet which was to come*, by  
a particular Description of the Time, Place,  
Manner of his Birth, the most remarkable  
Incidents of his Life, and the Circumstances  
and Consequences of his Death; and every  
thing else that either concerned his personal  
Endowments, or his publick Character. All  
which *Prophecies* were as a *Light shining in  
a dark Place*, whilst they remained yet un-  
fulfilled; but still they grew clearer, like the  
dawning of the Morn, as the Time of their  
Accomplishment drew nigh; and when the  
Gospel was once manifested, the Event of  
Things was a sufficient Interpreter to the ob-  
scurest Predictions; all was then as bright  
and conspicuous as the Sun in his *Meridian*  
Height.

But

SERM.V. But as these mysterious Truths had been  
 from Time to Time gradually imparted to the *Jews*, so to them also they were more directly proposed, and more explicitly delivered at the coming of the *Messiah*, because they had the Custody of those sacred *Oracles*, in which the Proof of all was contained.

*Christ* therefore, as being sent to the *lost Sheep of the House of Israel*, which was God's Peculiar, applies himself primarily to *them*; to *them* he opens his Credentials; to their *Moses* and their *Prophets* he appeals, even as Witnesses (by a *prophetical Spirit*) of those mighty Works which he wrought before their Eyes, as we find in the 5<sup>th</sup> Verse of this Chapter.

But at the same Time that he conversed so familiarly and condescendingly with the *Galilæans*, who gave no Credit to his Report, paid no Regard to his Miracles, he deigned no Visit to the *Tyrians* and *Sidonians*, who, though they were not so much lifted up with the Expectation of a *Messiah*, nor so well instructed to distinguish him, as were the *Jews*, yet were less prejudiced and hardened against his real Person, as it proved in the Event.

And therefore, though it was thought necessary (as we read, *Acts* xiii. 46.) that the Word of God should first be spoken to the Jews, yet when they put it away from them, and judged themselves unworthy of everlasting Life, the Apostles of Christ turned themselves to the Gentiles. Through the Fall of the former Salvation came also to the latter: And an early tender of it was made to the very People of Tyre and Sidon, mentioned in the Text, as may be seen again in the 21<sup>st</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> Chapters of the *Acts* of the Apostles.

SERM.V.

And when the Son of Righteousness had once broke forth, he rejoiced as a Giant to run his Course, and travelled with a prodigious Pace, and visited the most dark and distant Corners of the Earth, diffusing the Light of Christian Faith and Knowledge, and the Warmth of Christian Love and Zeal, wherever he went.

And yet some untaught and uncivilized Countries there are, to which the Illumination of the Gospel never yet reached, or at least, wherein no Footsteps of it remain now to be seen: And some of the most eminent and earliest Churches of Christ there are too, which have not retained the Truth they once received

SERM. V. received in the Love thereof; but have long since deserted it, and quitted the Possession to the *Synagogues of Satan*, or the *Mosques of Mahomet*.

And by this brief Deduction it appears, that the Method of God's all-wise Providence hath always been to dispense the Means of saving Truth and Knowledge, in different Measures and Degrees, to different People, and Generations of Men. And this Method we may reasonably presume, will still be continued: They who have hitherto sat in the *Shadow of Death*, and never seen the least Glimpse of heavenly Light, may one Day be enlivened and enlighten'd, by the Rays of the blessed Gospel of Christ: And the Posterity of those who now enjoy that glorious Light in its greatest Splendor, may for their Unworthiness be deprived of it, and be involved again in thick Darkness for ever.

In the mean Time, it becomes us, who live under the Dispensation of Grace, to accept the good Gifts of God with all Thankfulness, and use them with all Diligence and Faithfulness, without prescribing what, or to whom, how much, or how soon he ought



to give; which is <sup>a</sup> *Grotius's* Remark (and a *SERM.V.* very pious and just Remark it is) upon the Text. For 'tis in vain to indulge an evil Curiosity, and put the bold, but fruitless Question, why God revealed himself as he did, so gradually to the *Jews*, and so very sparingly to the *Gentiles*, before the coming of *Christ*? Or why the *Christian Revelation* hath been made known to some Countries, and hidden from others? Why it has shone forth illustriously in one Generation, and been eclipsed or totally extinguished in another? I say, 'tis in vain to look for a satisfactory Answer to any such Doubts, because they are the secret Things that belong unto God, and are much too deep for our Fathom.

But yet enough may be said in short to silence such *Querists*, and to clear the Justice and Goodness of God, even when he is judged by *presumptuous Man*.

For in the first Place it is certain, that God made Man upright, and endued him with Light sufficient to discern his Duty, and Strength to perform it. That he became

<sup>a</sup> *Grotii Annotat. in Matt. xi. 21.* Nostrium est grata Manu accipere dona quæ Deus largitur, non quæ ac quanta dare debeat ipsi præscribere.

SERM.V. incapable of either, was wholly owing to himself; and God, who had hitherto done the Part of a *faithful Creator* towards him, was in no Sort engaged (otherwise than by his own sovereign Will and Pleasure) to provide him of a *Saviour and Redeemer*. The whole Counsel of his Redemption therefore was a pure Act of free Grace; and as such, might in the Application of the outward Means be differently dispensed according to God's wise and secret Purposes: It might be extended to some, and withheld from others, without Injury to any, because there is none that can claim it as a Right.

But besides the *Blood of our Saviour* (which as the Scripture warrants us to speak) *is the Blood of God*, Acts xx. 28. is an *all-sufficient Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World*: And what Mortal will presume to determine, that the infinite Merit of Christ's precious Blood may not in some Degree be beneficial and salutary, even to those who never heard of him, or his blessed Gospel? Who can take upon him to say, that where the Defect of Faith proceeds only from the Want of the ordinary Means of hearing, but that God may, in the Bowels and Mercies of

Christ,

Christ, overlook that involuntary Defect, and SERM. V.  
by an extraordinary Enlargement of his Grace  
accept the very imperfect, but not insincere  
Obedience of those, who having no other  
Law than that written upon their own Hearts,  
have endeavoured to guide themselves by that  
Law, and to judge themselves by the impar-  
tial Verdict of their own Conscience?

That famous Passage in the 2<sup>d</sup> Chapter of  
the Epistle to the *Romans*, Ver. 14, 15. seems  
to afford room for Favour in this Case. But  
however it may be, this is most undoubted,  
that no Man shall be accountable for more  
than he hath received, no Man shall be con-  
demned for invincible Ignorance, or the Non-  
performance of Impossibilities: No Man shall  
be punished for not being a *Christian*, who  
never had the Opportunity of so being. This  
would be utterly inconsistent with the natural  
Notions and invariable Rules of all Justice;  
and therefore must needs be most abhorrent  
from the Divine Justice, which is sweetly  
temper'd with all the Riches of Goodness  
and Mercy. It is Time now to proceed to the

*Second* Consideration, suggested from the  
Text, viz. That the same Means of Grace

SERM.V. and Knowledge will operate differently upon Men of different Tempers and Dispositions.

There is no Doubt indeed to be made, but that God is able, whenever he pleases, to over-rule the stubborn Will of Man, to conquer all his Prejudices and Lusts, and *captivate every Thought to the Obedience of Christ*, by an irresistible Force: But that he does ordinarily so act upon the Minds of Men, is most unreasonable to think; because this would totally destroy all the Remains of natural Freedom, and take away the very Foundation of all Virtue; and in short there needs no other Argument to prove that the Grace of God may be resisted, than that it has been resisted.

And if the Operations of divine Grace in the Application of ordinary Means, be supposed to act consistently with the Liberty of human Actions, they must produce a different Effect, as Men are differently disposed, either to comply with them, or obstruct and oppose them. And this is evident from common Sense, as well as from common Experience.

For



For Reason has not the Power and Persu-  
fiveness of Reason, where 'tis not attended  
to: Truth cannot prevail where it is not at  
all regarded, or where there is an Unwilling-  
ness to own it: And no Evidence can clear  
it up, where Men have not the Patience to  
examine it, or are resolved to shut their Eyes  
against it. And familiar Instances of this  
Kind we meet with every Day we live. No-  
thing is more frequent than for Men to hold  
fast and hug the foulest Errors in spite of all  
Conviction, if they be but the Brats of their  
own Invention, or the Darlings of some fond  
Appetite; nothing is more frequent than to  
hear the plainest Truth denied, and the hom-  
est Proof rejected, when Interest is concerned  
to turn Disputant against it.

And if this happens (as it often does) in  
Matters of smaller Moment, or an indiffer-  
ent Nature; how much more when the se-  
vere Truths and Precepts of Religion are  
recommended to the Belief and Practice of  
Mankind; which are so irreconcilably oppo-  
site, not to one single Lust or Passion, but to  
all the corrupt Inclinations and Interests of  
Mankind?

It is therefore a certain ingenuous Freedom of Mind, and a Disentanglement from irregular and unreasonable Desires, that is the fittest Soil to plant Religion and Virtue in. Where these Qualifications are wanting, there will be a secret Averſion at the Bottom; and from that Root ſtrong Prejudices will grow up, and beget at length a malicious Oppoſition to the ſacred Truth, and the Laws of Holineſs; which naturally ends in a confirmed Obſtinacy, and an incorrigible Hardneſs of Heart, never by any Means to be melted or ſofter'd.

And this was the very Caſe of the *Galilæans*, upbraided by our Saviour in the Text, they believed not, they repented not, becauſe the Religion he taught was contrary to their prejudicate Opinions and Expectations, and too ſtrict for the looſe Practices that they had been bred up in, under their own *admired Doctors*, whoſe Intereſt, Reputation and Authority were all at ſtake, if ſuch a Teacher were ſuffered to prevail. This was the true Ground of all their Oppoſition to him: Hence their fooliſh Exceptions to his Parentage and Country: Hence their Blindneſs in overlooking all other the Characteriſticks of the true *Meſſiah*: Hence their Stupidity in not underſtanding

derstanding their own Scriptures, when *ful-*  
*filled in their very Ears:* Hence their ob-  
stinate Incredulity in not believing either him  
or his Works, though they were the very  
same that their own *Prophets* had *foretold:*  
Hence lastly, their unpardonable Blasphemy,  
in ascribing his most astonishing Miracles,  
the certain and distinguish'd Effects of a di-  
vine Power, to the Agency of the Devil,  
turning his Spite (if that were credible) up-  
on himself and his own Instruments.

Nor was their Infidelity and Impenitence  
in the least owing to any want of Evidence,  
or Efficacy in the Means of Conviction that  
were afforded to them. For he that knew all  
the secret Springs in Man's Heart, has here  
pronounced it against them; that if the *same*  
*Works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they*  
*would have repented long before in Sackcloth*  
*and Ashes.* And so it proved in the Experi-  
ment, when it came afterwards to be made.  
For when the Apostles of Christ were sent  
to the dispersed among the *Gentiles*, they  
found Disciples in this very *Tyre*, and *the*  
*Word of God grew and increased mightily,*  
marvelously, wheresoever they went. And  
yet it was the same Word of God that had

SERM. V.

before been proposed without Effect to the *Jews*, and which accorded so exactly with the *sure Word of Prophecy*, which they had in their own keeping; and was supported moreover by *Miracles*, such as *never Man wrought*, and those Miracles register'd in ancient Prophecies, which by such their Completion reflected a double Lustre upon the Truth.

And one would think that this Evidence should have approved itself with all possible Advantage to the *Jews*, because it was agreeable to their long Expectations of a *Messiah*, and to all the Tokens and Descriptions of him, set down in the holy Oracles; and when he was rejected after all by them, and embraced by the *Gentiles*, the Reason of the Difference must be, that these latter had some Ingenuity, and Simplicity, and Humility left for the Grace of God to work upon; whereas, the others were most disingenuously perverse, and affectedly blind, and so by their own Wilfulness fortified, and fatally concluded in Unbelief.

Now the present Use I would make of what has been said, under this Head is, that we should all *take heed to our selves, and not cherish*



*cherish an evil Heart of wilful Unbelief, or* SERM.V.

Disobedience, by stifling the clearest Evidence of Truth, or slighting Motives of the greatest Weight. For if we will thus baffle our own Understandings and Consciences; if we will make a refractory Resistance to the good Spirit of God, and all the Gospel Tenders of Grace, it is left in our Power so to do; if we will be blind in the midst of Light, and deaf to the Voice of Heaven; if we will be Infidels and Profligates, and even worse than *Jews* or *Heathens*, we still may: But then it should be remembred, that our Condition will be so much the worse too, and our final Account so much the heavier. For as all Men are strictly accountable to God for that Proportion of heavenly Light and Truth which he hath been pleased to afford them, so do they sin with the greater Aggravation, and are obnoxious to the greater Punishment, in Proportion, who resist the brightest Evidence, and hold it out against the most powerful Means of Conviction; which are the two Points that are next to come under Consideration, but must be reserved till another Opportunity. In the mean while, let us beseech Almighty God, *who sheweth to them that*

*be*

*SERM.V. be in Error the Light of his Truth, to the Intent that they may return into the Way of Righteousness, that he would grant to all them who are admitted into the Fellowship of Christ's Religion, that they may eschew those Things that are contrary to their Profession, and follow all Things that are agreeable to the same, thro' our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

*Now to God the Father, &c.*



S E R M O N VI.

God's different Dispensations of Religious Light consider'd.

MATTHEW XI. 21, 22.

*Woe unto thee Chorazin, Woe unto thee Bethsaida: For if the mighty Works which have been done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in Sackcloth and Ashes.*

*But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Day of Judgment than for you.*

**I**N these Words, as 'tis obvious to every SER. VI. one's Observation, there is a severer Doom pronounced afore-hand by *Christ*, that shall one Day come to be their *Judge*, against the

SER. VI. the unbelieving and impenitent *Jews* of *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida*, than against the more ingenuous *Heathens* of *Tyre* and *Sidon*.

The plain Reason of which is, because the former, besides the Help of a standing Revelation, had the Advantage of hearing the Words of him *who spake as never Man spake*; and seeing them confirmed too by mighty Works and Wonders, such as never Man did, and yet slighted and rejected both his Doctrine and Authority; whereas the latter had none of these Advantages, and therefore continued in Unbelief, not out of any wilful Opposition to the Truth, but purely for want of the same Means of Information and Conviction, which had they been indulged to them would have proved instrumental to their Conversion.

The Words therefore do acquaint us with the Rule or Measure by which God the Judge of the whole Earth will proceed at last in punishing *Infidelity* and *Impenitency*: And they are written for the *Instruction*, and *Admonition*, and *Caution* of all to whom this Gospel shall be preached.

And I offered to your Thoughts these four Particulars, which naturally arise from the Text,



*of Religious Light consider'd.*

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Text, and are well worth our Consideration. SER. VI.

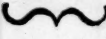
*First*, That God the Father of Lights has in his all-wise Providence thought fit to send out his Light and Truth; *i. e.* to dispense the Means of Knowledge and Salvation in different Measures and Degrees, to different People and Generations of Men.

*Secondly*, That the same Means of Grace and Knowledge, in the same Measure and Degree, will operate differently upon Men of different Tempers and Dispositions.

*Thirdly*, That all People are strictly accountable to God for that Proportion of Light and Truth which he hath been pleased to afford them; from whence it must be concluded,

*Fourthly*, That they are liable to the greater Punishment in Proportion, who have resisted the strongest Evidence, and sinned against the clearest Light.

The two former Points I have already considered, and shewn, *First*, That God hath in his all-wise Providence thought fit to dis-

SER. VI.  pense the Means of saving Knowledge in different Measures and Degrees, to different People and Generations of Men; and this from the very Beginning. For Man was at first created with the clearest Notices, to guide him in his Duty, as well as Strength sufficient to perform it. And the Defect of this natural Light, after it was impaired by the Fall, was supplied by *occasional* Revelations; and that *traditionary* Knowledge, which was the Privilege of the *patriarchal* Age: After this a *written Law* (confirmed by *Miracles*) was given to the *Jews*, but not promulged to the *Gentiles*. And as this Law that was given by *Moses* did in many of its Institutions prefigure the *Messiah* promised immediately upon *Adam's Fall*, so the *Prophets* who succeeded did foretell and describe him (and thereby prepare the World to receive him) in a most particular and remarkable Manner. And when in the *Fulness of Time* the *Messiah* did appear and manifest himself, to this very *Moses*, and these *Prophets* he appealed, as Witnesses to his Mission, Doctrine, and Miracles: And his Works were the more evident Proof and Demonstration of his own Authority, because they were so exact a Completion of the *Scriptures*. And

And this glorious Light of the Gospel of <sup>SER. VI.</sup> *Christ* (made glorious by a double Lustre of *Prophecies* and *Miracles*) was first held out to the *Jews*, particularly to the *Galilæans* (such as were those in the Text) with whom *Christ* conversed in the most familiar and condescending Manner, and yet with all the Credentials of a divine Authority: Which when obstinately rejected by them, the Tender was then made to the *Gentiles*, as it was very early, as it was to the Inhabitants of *Tyre* and *Sidon* here mentioned; and the *Word of God* grew mightily, prodigiously, and spread itself far and wide over the greatest Part of the habitable World. And yet, perhaps, some dark Corners there may be, that never yet saw the least Glimpse of *heavenly* Light. And in others, 'tis notorious, it has long since been extinguished, and the *Candlestick* wholly removed. So that upon the whole Matter it appears, that the Means of Knowledge and Salvation have been differently dispensed to different People and Generations of Men. In the mean while it certainly becomes us, who live under the *Gospel Meridian*, to receive the good Gifts of God with all Thankfulness; and to use them with all Diligence; and not  
to

SER. VI. to make presumptuous Enquiries into the Reason of that *Diversity* which may be observed in *other Parts* or *Ages* of the World from what we live in ; for these are the *Secrets* of God ; but this is clear from the very natural Notions of God's Justice and Goodness, that no Mortal shall be accountable for more than he has received ; none shall be condemn'd for invincible Ignorance, or the Non-performance of Impossibilities.

But to shew how foolish, as well as presumptuous it is for Men to charge God, when the Fault always lies at their own Doors, I have offered it to your Consideration in the *Second Place*, That the same Means of Grace and saving Knowledge will operate differently upon People of different Tempers and Dispositions. For it is certain that the *Grace* of *God* acts upon the Minds of Men in such a Manner as is consistent with their *natural Freedom*, and not with a Force that is irresistible. And there needs no other Argument to prove that it *may be* resisted, than that it *has been* resisted. And if it may be resisted, then it must operate differently, according as Men are differently disposed, either to comply with its kindly Motions, or to oppose them ; and  
it



it can *there* only have its due Effect, where SER. VI.  
there is a proper Subject to work upon; *i. e.*  
a Mind in some Measure endued and prepar-  
ed with native Simplicity, Ingenuity and  
Humility.

And the Text is an Instance, that comes  
full up to the Case. For these *Galilæan Jews*  
had the Opportunity of hearing Christ's Hea-  
venly Doctrine and seeing his mighty Works,  
and they were particularly acquainted with  
the Writings of *Moses* and the *Prophets*, that  
bore Testimony to them both. The Gospel  
therefore came recommended to them with  
all possible Advantage; with the highest De-  
gree of Evidence of which it was capable.  
And yet *seeing*, they *would not see*, and *hear-*  
*ing*, they *would not bear*, nor *understand*:  
So stupid was their Folly, so incurable their  
Perverseness. And yet, had the *Tyrians* and  
*Sidonians* enjoyed the same Opportunity, they,  
as their Judge witnesses for them, would  
have submitted to the powerful Evidence,  
and *repented in Sackcloth and Ashes*; and  
they did so, soon after; they and the rest of  
the *Gentiles* readily embraced the Gospel,  
though they were almost wholly Strangers,  
both to the *Promises* and *Prophecies* of a Mes-

SER. VI. *fiab* to come. But though they wanted this Advantage that was peculiar to the *Jews*, yet they were free from that Pride, Prejudice, and Perverseness, that hardened the *Jews* in their Unbelief, and were in a Disposition to be convinced and converted by the single Argument of Miracles. And from this very Instance we may draw a general Conclusion; that wheresoever the *Gospel* does not obtain its Effect upon Mens Minds and Hearts, it is in no wise owing to any want of Evidence or Inefficacy in the Means, but purely and solely unto some voluntary Defect or Indisposition in the Subject: So that all *Infidelity* and *Impenitency* must be resolved at last into downright Willfulness and Obstinacy. I proceed now,

*Thirdly*, to the third Thing observable from the Text; *viz.* That all People are strictly accountable to God, for that Measure of Light and Truth that he hath been pleased to afford them.

And this is most agreeable to Reason and Justice. For God is the *Giver of every good Gift unto Men*; but he gives no useless Gifts; they are all intended and peculiarly fitted to promote his own Honour, and the Benefit of the Receivers. And

*of Religious Light consider'd.*

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And in Obedience to him as their *Sovereign* SER. VI.

*Lord and Ruler*, Men are obliged *so* to employ and improve them; and to him also, as their *sovereign Judge*, they are liable to render a final Account.

And as God has imparted the *Light of Reason* to all Men, so all are obliged to follow this *Light*, wheresoever it plainly leads them, and they have no surer Guide; and they are certainly punishable for leaving it, where it points them (as it always does, unless where 'tis extremely eclipsed indeed) to their natural Duty, founded upon the essential and unalterable Difference between Vice and Virtue.

And where *Revelation* is superadded to Reason, that (as the *greater Light*, ought to rule the Day) being a more explicate Declaration of God's Mind and Will, ought to be a Law to Mens Actions; and if it be not received and obeyed as such (where-ever 'tis fairly proposed) the Transgressors are certainly answerable for an high Contempt against the Lawgiver.

But though this Contempt be a great Aggravation to the Guilt of those who have a *Revelation*, yet the want of a *Revelation*

SER. VI. is no Excuse for *them* who disobey the plain  
 Dictates of *natural Reason*.

For when the *Gentiles which have not the Law*, says Saint Paul (*Romans ii. 14.*) *do by Nature the Things contained in the Law, these having not the Law, are a Law unto themselves: And therefore as many as sin without Law (i. e. without any positive or revealed Law) shall perish without any such Law.* They shall perish notwithstanding, because they sin against the natural Law of their own Minds, and by that Law they will be most justly condemned.

And of this, that Parable of the *Talents* may serve as a very apt Illustration. For when the Lord came to reckon with his Servants, to whom he had delivered his Goods, he *required an Account*, and expected an *Improvement* from each of them, according to the Value of his Stock. And when he that was intrusted with *five Talents* had encreased them to as many more, and he that had received two had doubled them likewise, it could be no reasonable Plea for him, that had received but one *Talent*, to say, Alas! *mine* was but a *single one*, and what could I do with that? I e'en went and *hid it in the Earth*, and lo! *there*



*there thou hast that is thine.* But it was still SER. VI. more unreasonable to impeach the *Justice* of his *Lord*, and plead, that he knew him to be a hard Man, and one that would *reap where he had not sown, and gather where he had not straw'd*, and that therefore he despaired of satisfying his Demands.

For this was not his Case: All that was expected from him was but a *proportionable* Improvement of his *single* Talent: For the Neglect of that he was judged to be a *slothful, unprofitable and wicked* Servant; had his neglected Talent taken from him, and was *cast into outer Darknefs*. And so it is with every Man that hath the Light of *Reason* (and no other but that) from *him* 'tis expected, that he should walk by that Light, that he should use and improve his Reason the best he can; which if he neglect to do, he is liable to a judicial Darknefs, to God's righteous Judgment, not because he had no better Light, but because he neglected to follow that he had.

And this is what suits exactly with the Example of the Text: For though it will be *more tolerable at the Day of Judgment* (as the most equitable Judge hath determined) *for Tyre and Sidon, than for Chorazin and Beth-*

SER. VI. *faida*; yet it will be *only more* tolerable; they will be still liable to Punishment, for transgressing *Nature's* Law, in Proportion to their Demerit; For 'tis most just and fit, that every one should be strictly accountable for the Measure of Light and Truth that has been afforded to him; and consequently we must conclude,

*Fourthly*, in the fourth and last Place, that they are liable to the greater Punishment in Proportion, who resist the strongest Evidence, and sin against the clearest Light.

And this is according to the settled Notions of all *distributive Justice*; for the Account will swell answerably to the Largeness of the Receipts; and 'tis fit and right, that the Punishment should be equal to the Dimensions of the Crime.

And where Men will hold it out against all the reasonable Means of Conviction, greater is their Obstinacy; where they will slight the obvious Means of Knowledge, or even dare to sin against Knowledge, the greater is their Contempt. And such their Obstinacy and Contempt extremely aggravates their Sin; and without all Question, they deserve

*of Religious Light consider'd.*

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to be punished in a degree proportionable to <sup>SER. VI.</sup> the Heinousness of the Aggravation.

And in this respect, the *Jews* are much more liable than mere *Heathens*; because over and above the Guidance of *Reason*, they have a *divine Revelation* to direct them; and therefore are answerable for all the Transgressions of this undoubted *Revelation*. And besides the *Revelation* that they own, there is another, which they reject, though it be supported by the same kind of Evidence (tho' in a higher Degree) with their own; that is to say, by Miracles; many and great, and most indisputable Miracles: And still they reject it, though it stands upon the same Bottom with their own; nay though it is the exact *Counterpart* of their own, and a most punctual Completion of all their famous *Prophecies*, even according to the Sense in which their *Fathers* anciently understood them. And therefore their Rejection of the Gospel must proceed from a most obstinate and malicious Opposition to the Truth; and as such, it has been remarkably punished in this World, and will be with still greater Severity in the next.

SER. VI.

And if the *Jews* are so heinously guilty for thus rejecting the Counsel of God against themselves, when it was proposed to them in a much more advantageous Manner than it was to the *Gentiles*, how much more so are the *unbelieving* and *profligate Christians*?

Such I mean as have been born of *Christian* Parents, and baptized into the *Christian* Faith, and educated and instructed in the Principles thereof; and yet have the Forehead to call the very Credit of the Gospel in Question, or to live in open Defiance of its most holy Laws; the *Infidelity* and *Impenitency* of such is as contemptuous as is possible, it approaches near to the Nature of wilful *Apostacy*, and is capable of no Defence, or Alleviation. For 'tis in vain to renounce the *Christian Faith* at this Time of Day, upon any Pretence of want of Evidence; 'tis in vain to say, that they who now live are upon a great Disadvantage in Comparison of those who were so happy to be *Ear-Witnesses* to Christ's heavenly Doctrine, and *Eye-Witnesses* to his Miracles. Theirs indeed was the Evidence of *Sense*, which is the most immediate and affecting of any other; but yet though it affects one in a different Manner,



Manner, it is not in *Reason* more convinc-  
 ing, it is not in *Nature* more absolutely cer-  
 tain, than is the Faith of indubitable *History*.  
 For if we were to indulge eternal *Scepticism*,  
 and go to the utmost Stretch of Things, it  
 cannot be *demonstrated* of *either* of *them*,  
 that it was *impossible* it should be false: And  
 yet it would be most unreasonable and ab-  
 surd, where the Nature of the Thing does  
 not require, does not admit such kind of  
 Proof, *therefore* to suspect it to be false. And  
 in the present Case, the Veracity, Justice, and  
 Goodness of God do forbid the blasphemous  
 Thought, that he should suffer an *Imposture*  
 to pass undiscovered, and undiscoverable up-  
 on the Belief of Mankind; either through  
 the Deception of *Sense*, or the Misinformation  
 of *History*. And the Veracity, Justice and  
 Goodness of God, are an equal Security in  
 both Respects, and indeed they are the only  
 Foundation of real Certainty, whether it be  
 in Matters of *Sense*, or Records of *History*.

And to shew how destitute of all Reason,  
 and even void of common Sense they are,  
 who venture to disbelieve or disobey the *Gos-  
 pel*, under Shelter of such pitiful Cavils; 'tis  
 notorious, that they are induced to believe

SER. VI. and act in *other Cases* (and Cases in their Reckoning of great Importance too) upon the *same Kinds* of Grounds and Motives; but inferior in *Degree* to those which they flight in the great Concern of *Religion*, and Safety of their own Souls. For there is none of them so ridiculous as to make any Scruple of crediting any other well attested *History*; and yet there was never any other History so unexceptionably well attested, as that of the *Gospel*; never any other *Historian* that sealed to the Truth of what he related, with his own dearest Blood, besides the holy *Evangelists*. Again, they are ready and exact enough at computing the probable *Loss* and *Gain* in any Kind of Traffick, and at comparing the probable Hazard of any Enterprize, with the Advantage that will ensue upon it, if it should succeed; and yet these very Men will risque the *Loss* of *Heaven*, which is an infinite Loss; and thereby incur the Damnation of Hell, which is an intolerable Torment, for every *inconsiderable Toy* or *Trifle*, a little mouldering Gain, or fugitive Pleasure.

And of all Sinners, surely the most inexcusable are they, who are *nominal Christians*, but *real Atheists*, both in Opinion and Practice;  
for

for these are the Men that stifle the Dictates SER. VI. of their *own Minds*, and shut their Eyes against the *brightest Revelation*; that are the greatest Contemnners of divine Grace, and the boldest Defiers of Heaven; and are therefore obnoxious to the Severity of God's Anger, and will inherit the largest Portion of his Vengeance, probably even in this World, and most certainly and unavoidably in that which is to come.

For what remains, let us seriously reflect upon what has been discoursed, and see how any Part of it may suit our own Circumstances, and thence make a Judgment what our Condition is, and what our Behaviour ought to be.

It is most evident from the Tenour of the foregoing Discourse, that it has all along been the Method of Providence, to dispense the Means of Grace and saving Knowledge in different Measures and Degrees, and always in such a Manner too, that they operate differently upon different Tempers and Dispositions: It is likewise evident, that all Men are strictly accountable for every such Gift of God, or Talent of Improvement: And they in particular are most severely punishable,  
who

SER. VI. who have most neglected, or misimproved their Talent, that have resisted the strongest Evidence, and slighted the weightiest Motives, and sinned against the clearest Light.

And now, if we would *judge our selves*, and not provoke the Judgments of God, it must be owned in the first Place, that we have long enjoy'd the Gospel Means, and perhaps in the greatest Purity and Perfection of any People in the *Christian World*. *We* have the Word of God purely taught, and not blended with human Traditions, *We* have the Sacraments of Christ rightly and duly administered, with all Solemnity and Reverence, and without any Mixture of Superstition: In brief, *We* have all the best Means of Instruction, and the best Helps to Devotion, that any Church upon Earth can boast of.

It must be owned also, that these great and manifest Advantages do lay us under the stricter Obligation to *adorn our Profession*, by a suitable Practice, and to demonstrate the Efficacy of the Means, by our actual Growth in Grace, and Advancement in all Godliness and Virtue.

But alas! where shall we find any real Footsteps of this? Or rather, where shall we



we not find the visible and undeniable Tokens of the contrary? For there is a strange Degeneracy, not to say a monstrous Defection among us: And we are so far from living up to our Principles, that we have scarce any settled Principles left to live by; the sacred Name of Religion, that always used to carry Awe with it, is now wantonly tossed up and down, and become a Scorn in the Mouth of *Fools*. Every *Stripling* is now a-days a forward Champion for *Infidelity*, and thinks himself able to dispute all *Mysteries* out of the Bible, and all *Creeds* out of the Church: And there is but too much Silence and Sufferance on their Parts, whom it would much better become to be their Reprovers. In short, there seems to be a sort of general Disinclination, or even Aversion to believe too much of *Christianity*, to submit to its divine Authority, or be governed by its holy Rules and Precepts: For the Licentiousness of our Manners is equal to the Looseness of our Principles: and we seem to be abandoned in both Respects beyond the Checks of common Modesty, and the Sense of all *Decorum*, and even the Restraints of *ordinary Grace*.

And

SER. VI. And what can we think of ourselves the mean while, or where is the End of these Things like to be? Have we not Reason to apprehend, that God's Anger is kindled against us, and his Fury growing and gathering to a Flame, that sooner or later will consume us? Have we not Reason to apprehend, that the Woe of the Text belongs to our selves; and that we stand dangerously exposed to the *double Woe* of God's temporal Judgments,, and the everlasting Torments of Hell Fire? And the former only as a Fore-runner of the latter.

In particular, we are apt at all Times to be very fearful of *Popery*, and Reason good, because we know its *Mercies* to be *cruel*; and have we not now Cause, as much as ever, to fear that *Popery* should be sent in a *judicial Way*, as God's angry Messenger, even to *re-form* the *Reformed*? *i. e.* to *catechise* them in their common *Christianity*, and to *scourge* them into *better Manners*? And do we not seem to stand in need of the fiery Trial, that have so much Dross to be purged off? Do we not deserve in God's just Judgment to have the Bible taken away from us, when we read it even with an *evil Heart* of *Unbelief*,

lief, and as soon as we have done, with *pro-*<sup>SER. VI.</sup>  
*fane Lips ridicule and blaspheme* it? And is  
there not a wide Breach to let in *Popery* with  
all its Absurdities, amidst such a Multiplicity  
of *Sects* professing Religion, and yet so much  
want of Seriousness in Religion, and so much  
Indifferency to all? Will it not be almost nat-  
ural for the People after wandering till they  
are weary, to take up their Rest somewhere  
at last, though it be in the midst of Error  
and *Superstition*? And may they not proba-  
bly be tempted at length to throw themselves  
into the Arms of *Infallibility*, and sue for the  
Benefit of the *Pope's* Absolution; so thinking  
and hoping to resettle their Principles, and  
salve their Consciences, when quite grown  
sick of *Irreligion* and *Immorality*.

And verily these are no imaginary Fears,  
but real Threatnings, and imminent Dangers,  
if we consider how many, and great, and  
grievous our Provocations are in the Sight of  
God. Nay we may justly apprehend some-  
thing worse even than *Popery* it self: For if  
we reflect once more upon our own *Abomina-*  
*tions* and *Prophanations*, how much we have  
trampled upon God's holy Laws, contemned  
his Authority, affronted his Majesty, called

SER. VI. in Question the Truth of his sacred Word, and the Divinity of his ever blessed Son, and the Immortality of our own Souls: In a Word, if we reflect how boldly we renounce some of our very *Christian* Principles, and break through the Bonds of all religious Obligations, we shall find too much Cause to fear, that God will be provoked to come quickly, and fight against us with the Sword of his Mouth, and *remove our Candlestick out of its Place*, and not only *eclipse*, but extinguish the Light of the Gospel from among us, and suffer it to be succeeded by *Pagan Ignorance*, and Darknefs, thick and gloomy as the Shadow of Death itself.

This we know was once the sad Fate of the seven Churches of *Asia*, which were famous in their Time, and very early and eminent Converts to the Faith of Christ; but when they fell from their first Love, and *apostatized* from that Faith, they were soon abandoned, and have now long since been the Triumph of *Mahomet*, and are turned into *Synagogues of Satan*. And alas! what have we to ease us of the like Fears, or to give us Hopes of being exempt from the like Judgments? I am sure it has been said above half a Century ago; that

*Religion*

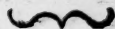


*of Religious Light consider'd.*

*Religion stands on Tiptoe in our Land,  
Ready to pass to the American Strand.*

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SER. VI.



This was then the Apprehension of an excellent Person, who had certainly the *Spirit of Piety*, if he had not that of *Prophecy*. And if it was on *Tiptoe* then, we may well believe it to be on the *Wing* now; for besides the height of Malice, those prodigious Lusts, and that impudent finning which gave the pious *Herbert* this melancholy Thought, we have other and greater Aggravations, other and plainer Marks of *Apostacy*.

And we seem in so much the more Readiness to part with our *Gospel* for the *Gold* of *America*, because we are already furnished both with *Principles* and *Morals*, that would suit exactly well with *Heathenism*, much better it must be owned than with the Profession of *Christianity*.

Let us all therefore, high and low, old and young, Magistrates, Ministers, and People, lay these Things seriously to Heart; let us with great Sincerity and Contrition of Spirit confess and bewail our manifold and crying Sins, both national and personal. Let the few good intercede for the many bad;

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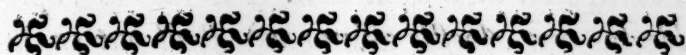
and

162 *God's different Dispensations, &c.*

**SER. VI.** and by their earnest and humble Deprecations, endeavour to divert God's Fury from a *devoted Land and People* : And let us, every one of us look carefully into our own Breasts, and cast out all Iniquity from thence, and every darling Lust ; and having reformed first at home, let us contribute what lies in us, to a general and publick Reformation ; lest *the Kingdom of Heaven be taken away from us, and given to a Nation bringing forth the Fruits thereof*. Or lest it should serve only to our Condemnation at last, and make our Doom more intolerable at the Day of Judgment, than that of *Jews, or Heathens*.

And oh ! that we *may in this our Day see the Things that belong to our temporal and eternal Peace, before they be hidden from our Eyes*. Amen.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, &c.



## S E R M O N VII.

Life and Immortality brought to  
Light through the Gospel.



2 TIM. i. 10. latter Part.

— *And hath brought Life and Immortality to Light, through the Gospel.*

**B**Y that *Life and Immortality*, the clear SER. VII.  
and full Discovery of which is owing  
to the *Gospel of Jesus Christ*, we are  
to understand an immortal Life, in Opposi-  
tion to this mortal Life, which depends upon  
a precarious and loose kind of Union between  
Soul and Body, that will one Day be dissolv'd  
by Death. But the Life immortal commences  
after Death, and will consist in a vigorous,  
firm, and inseparable Reunion of the same  
Soul and Body, never more to be subjected to

M 2

Corruption

SER. VII. *Corruption or Dissolution. For this corruptible (as our Apostle assures us) shall put on Incorruption, and this mortal shall put on Immortality. (1 Cor. xv. 53.)* And in another Place he says, *We know that if our earthly House of this Tabernacle were dissolved, we have a Building of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens. (2 Cor. v. 1.)*

And this *immortal Life* denotes in general a future State of Rewards or Punishments, commencing after the End of this Life, and compleatly fixed after the Resurrection of the Dead; or else a State of Happiness, in which the Righteous only shall then be invested. For so the Word *Life* is taken by it self (*Matt. xix. 17.*) *If thou wilt enter into Life keep the Commandments: So Immortality and eternal, i. e. immortal Life (Rom. ii. 7.) To them, who by patient Continuance in well-doing seek for Honour and Glory, and Immortality; eternal Life.*

And the *Life and Immortality* in the Text must be understood 'tis probable in this latter Sense, because we find in the Verse foregoing, *that it was according to God's own Purpose and Grace given us in Christ Jesus, before the*  
*World*



*World began.* From whence 'tis plain it <sup>SER.VII.</sup>  
was intended as Matter of Grace and Favour,  
as a *Gift from God*. And we read (*Rom. vi.*  
*23.*) that *the Gift of God* (as it stands op-  
posed to the *Wages of Sin, which is Death*)  
*is eternal Life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

But I shall take the Liberty to use it pro-  
miscuously, either for a future State of *Re-*  
*wards* and *Punishments* in general, or a State  
of *Happiness* in particular, as it shall best  
happen to fall in with the Course of my Ar-  
gument in the Sequel. The Argument that  
I design to go upon is this.

It is here asserted by *St. Paul*, that *our Sa-*  
*viour Jesus Christ brought Life and Immor-*  
*tality to Light, through the Gospel; i. e.* that  
he therein revealed it to us that there should  
be a future State of Rewards (suppose) for the  
Righteous, and of Punishment for the Wick-  
ed. But now this is a Truth of that Impor-  
tance, that without it there would hardly be  
any sufficient Inducements to the Practice of  
Religion, or any Encouragement to our ver-  
tuous Endeavours: Piety would soon languish  
for want of somewhat to support it, and Pre-  
cept would be too weak to put any Life or  
Vigour into it. It cannot be supposed there-

SER. VII. fore (one would think) that God should leave himself without a Witness, or the World, for some thousands of Years, without a Monitor of a Truth so very useful and necessary : It is not to be imagined sure, that natural Reason should be altogether in the dark, and former *Revelations* perfectly silent, in a Point of so great Moment. And yet our Apostle ascribes the Discovery, we see, to the Gospel Revelation, as if there were no Footsteps of it to be found any where else, although he does not insinuate any thing to the contrary but that there may, and upon the Reasons already hinted 'tis probable there are. And even though any such Footsteps should be found, the Apostle's Assertion, rightly understood, will still hold good, viz. that *Jesus Christ hath brought Life and Immortality to Light, through the Gospel.*

In order therefore to settle this Point, I must enquire into these three Particulars :

*First*, Whether there were any Notices from the Light of Nature, or the *Mosaical Revelation* concerning the Matter in question.

*Secondly*, If any such there were, wherein they were defective. And

*Thirdly*,

Thirdly, How such supposed Defects were supply'd by the *Gospel of Jesus Christ.* SER. VII.

*First*, The first Enquiry is, whether there were any Notices from the Light of Nature, or the *Mosaical Revelation* concerning the Matter in question.

1<sup>st</sup>, As to the Light of Nature, I make no doubt at all, but Man, in his first Innocence, had sufficient Evidence of the Immortality he was designed for: For God created him, we read (*Gen. i. 27.*) *in his own Image; i. e.* as the Author of the Book of *Wisdom* paraphrases upon it, *he created him to be immortal, and made him an Image of his own Eternity. (Wisdom ii. 23.)*

And it is not easily to be conceived, that a Creature fram'd for immortal Happiness, should be sent into the World without so much as the Notion or Expectation of Immortality.

It is scarcely to be thought that he should be left wholly insensible of so powerful a Motive to Obedience, and the noble Privilege to which God had entitled him.

It is much more rational to conclude, that there was then no need of an external Revelation to confirm that, which was already

SER.VII. sufficiently evident, either by an immediate  
 ~~~~~ Impression upon his Mind, or the obvious and  
 easy Deductions of his own unclouded Reason.

I know it may be said, that to suppose an immediate Impression in this Case, is in Effect to suppose a divine Revelation, which is beside the Point, when we are appealing to the Light of Nature. But even the Faculty of Reasoning it self, if you trace it to its Original, is an Illumination from God; and so it comes to the same Thing. My Meaning therefore only is, that it is in the highest Degree probable, whether we consider the true Frame of human Nature, or the Justice and Goodness of God, that Man had his Reward set in view before him, as well as his Punishment. But since 'tis the latter only that there is explicit Revelation for, the former must be supposed to be notify'd some other Way, and doubtless in some such Way as carried its own Evidence along with it, whether it were by the clear Dictates of his native Reason, or some other brighter Communication.

That his own Reason might be sufficient to enlighten him in this Matter, whilst it was
 in

in its original Purity, is no Difficulty with SER. VII. me; because we find even dim as it is at present, that it gives us some very good Hints of its own, some shrewd Significations of a future and immortal State.

Such I take to be that natural Thirst after Happiness and Immortality, which nothing in this Earth can satisfy; and it is strange so universal and so eager an Appetite as this should be implanted in our Nature without any real Object that is adequate to it.

Such also is the impartial Testimony of Conscience, excusing and applauding us when we do well, but severely accusing and terrifying us when we do otherwise. And the Terrors of an upbraiding Conscience are so very great to those who labour under them, that no Secresy can make them think themselves secure, no Power can make them promise themselves Indemnity. And if the Conscience that has nothing to hope or fear from this Life (as it frequently happens) does notwithstanding fill Men with secret Hopes and Fears, these must be allowed to be evident Prefages of a Life to come, a future State of Rewards and Punishments. Rewards greater than any this World can bestow, and Punish-
ments

SER. VII. ments greater than any it can inflict; because
 they are both eternal.

But moreover we may perhaps deduce a very rational Proof of this from Matter of common Observation. For 'tis notorious there is no exact Distribution of Justice in this Life: Nay, as the State of Things is, 'tis even impossible there should be. For one Man may in the Innocence of his Soul suffer Injuries beyond all temporal Reparation, and another may commit such horrid Villanies as no finite Punishment can compensate for. This is Fact, and not to be deny'd; and the necessary Inference from it is this, that if God be provident and just, as most certainly he is, then there must be a State of Retribution hereafter, wherein the Disproportion and Defect of temporal Rewards and Punishments shall be abundantly made up by such as are everlasting.

These, and some other such Reasons as these, were the Foundation of those strong Presumptions that even the *Heathens* themselves had of a future State, as 'tis obvious to observe in the Writings of *Plato*, *Plutarch*, *Tully*, *Seneca*, and others.

And

And if these Men could see so far before SER.VII. them, and make such notable Guesſes at Futurity, by the dim Taper of their *then* benighted Reason, it is not to be doubted, but the Faculty itself, when in its Morning Brightness, and not yet clouded with any Mist of Sin or Error, was much more capable of discovering and discerning a Truth so essential and fundamental to all Religion.

But however,

2dly, That it might not be totally buried in the Ruins of human Reason upon the Fall of *Adam*, it was communicated by early *Revelation*, and confirmed by repeated Instances and Declarations, both before the Law, and after.

The first *Revelation* of it that we find recorded, is contained in the Prohibition concerning the *Tree of Knowledge*, and the Threatning thereunto annexed. God commanded the Man, saying, *Thou shalt not eat of it; for in the Day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*; or dying thou shalt die (*Gen. ii. 17.*) *i. e.* thou shalt die eternally; which evidently implies, that on the other Hand, in case he should abstain in Obedience to God's Command, he should as *surely live*, and *live eternally*

SER. VII. *eternally too*; and if the latter be not so explicitly delivered as the former, we may well presume that it was otherwise sufficiently notify'd, and that there was as yet no need of Repetition.

But that the Posterity of lapsed *Adam* might not become forgetful of it, or unattentive to it, it was renew'd upon their Remembrance, by the remarkable Translation of *Enoch*, the seventh Descendent from him. For *Enoch* (the sacred Story tells us, *Gen. v. 24.*) *walked with God, and was not; for God took him.* He took him to himself, and admitted him to enter into Life, not through the Gate of Death, but by an immediate Translation that prevented Death. (*Heb. xi. 5.*) And this befell him when he was yet but 365 Years old, not half the Age of any that had gone before him, and yet he was *translated, because he pleased God*; for before his Translation, the *Apostle* says he had this Testimony. (Ver. 6.) His Translation therefore being a Mark of God's especial Favour, it must needs infer, that he was *translated* to a Life much better and happier than that he lived on Earth: Although he liv'd no doubt in this pious Belief, and his *Hope*, even whilst

whilst he was here below, *was full of Immor-* SER. VII.
talities. And thus it was that he *pleased God,*
 and so received the *End of his Faith*; it being
 impossible, as the Apostle argues, *without*
Faith to please God; for he that *cometh unto*
God must believe that he is, and that he is a
Rewarder of those that diligently seek him.
 (Heb. xi. 6.) This *Faith* therefore 'tis plain
Enoch himself had; and his Translation was,
 to those who then lived, an undeniable Proof,
 and remains now a Monument upon Record,
 of the Truth and Certainty of what he be-
 lieved.

This is farther confirmed by God's gracious
 Promise to *Abraham, and his Seed* after him;
 (Heb. xi. 9, 10.) which notwithstanding, he
 was content, as the *Apostle* sets it forth, *to so-*
journe even in the Land of Promise, as in a
strange Country, dwelling in Tabernacles: for
he looked for a City which hath Foundations,
whose Builder and Maker is God. And upon
 the firm Expectation of this celestial Abode
 he chearfully and securely rested his Hopes,
 though he never lived himself to have a fixed
 Possession, much less to see his Offspring set-
 tled in *Canaan.* For that they were not till
 400 Years after; and yet (Ver. 13, 14, 15, 16.)

These

SER. VII. *These all died in Faith, not having received the Promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were Strangers and Pilgrims on Earth. For they that say such Things, declare plainly that they seek a Country. And truly if they had been mindful of that Country, from whence they came out, they might have had Opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better Country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath provided for them a City, namely the heavenly Jerusalem, which is watered with Rivers of Pleasures for evermore; of which, the earthly ones inhabited afterwards by their Children, and flowing with Milk and Honey, was but a Type or Shadow. And*

The Belief of a future State (besides the Foundation it has in Reason) being thus grounded, as it was, upon an immediate Revelation to *Adam* (repeated probably again to *Noah*, and so handed down by Tradition, but) confirmed in the mean Time by the memorable Translation of *Enoch*, and enforced afterwards by the Tenour of God's Promise to *Abraham*, which must of Necessity be extended

tended beyond this present Life; I say the SER. VII.
Belief of this being so well established, it
might well be taken for granted, at least there
was no need of having it particularly incul-
cated in the Law that was given by *Moses*,
especially since he also was the Historian that
had given the Relation of all these Matters.

It might suffice therefore for him to refer to
what he had already testified concerning a
future State; as apparently he does, when
God is introduced, as styling himself *the God*
of Abraham, the God of Isaac and of Jacob.
(*Exod. iii. 6.*) Which being spoken after
they were all dead, and God being a *God of*
the Living, and not of the Dead, it must
needs imply, that there was another Life
after this, in respect of which the deceased
Patriarchs do still live unto God; and it is
an Error proceeding from want of Know-
ledge in the Scriptures to deny it, as our Sa-
viour told the *Sadducees* in his Days, (*Matt.*
xxii. 31. Mark xii. 24. Luke xx. 37.)

And even the Example of *Moses* was an
Illustration and Enforcement to his Doctrine
in this Particular; for he, the *Apostle* tells
us, *had Respect to the Recompence of Reward;*
(*Heb. xi. 26.*) and yet, as we read in the last

SER. VII. of Deuteronomy, (xxxiv. 1.) he had no more than a View of the promised Land from *Mount Nebo*; for he entered not into it, but died in the Mount, as God had determined that he should. And therefore the Recompence that he had his chief Regard to, as it did not, could not consist in Blessings meerly temporal, so it must in all Reason be understood of such as were future and eternal.

In like Manner *Elijah* being visibly taken up into Heaven in a Chariot of Fire, and Horses of Fire, left behind him as it were, the shining Traces of a Life immortal and incorruptible, reserved in the Heaven for us. And this Assumption of the Prophet was also a very significant Figure of our Lord's triumphant Ascension.

And the passionate Wish of *Balaam*, *Let me die the Death of the Righteous, and let my last End be like his*, (Numb. xxiii. 10.) is a fresh Confirmation that there was even then a received Principle, and the Belief and Expectation of good Men, that they should enter upon an unchangeable State of Happiness after Death.

Add to all this the express Declaration of the Prophet *Daniel* (xii. 2.) *many of them*
that

that sleep in the Dust shall awake; some to SER. VII.
everlasting Life, and some to Shame and ever-
lasting Contempt.

And of this *Faith* were the Martyrs in the 2 *Maccabees* vii. 6. who at the very last Gasped professed that they looked for Hope from God, expecting to be raised again by him to everlasting Life; and the Apostle also bears them this Testimony, that they were *tortur'd, not accepting Deliverance, that they might obtain a better Resurrection.* (Heb. xi. 35.)

In the result therefore of this Disquisition, I think it appears, that there were early Notices of a future State of Rewards and Punishments, both from the Light of Nature and divine Revelation, and that both before the Promulgation of the *Mosaick Law*, and after it. I proceed now to enquire,

Secondly, Wherein these Notices were defective. And

1st. As for those derivable from the Light of Nature, however clear they might be in their first Source, it must be owned, the Streams soon grew muddy, and were almost quite buried in *Brutishness* and *Sensuality*, and even where they did hold their Course,

SER. VII. mingled with many erroneous Conceits which were altogether gross and carnal.

This is notorious enough from the Writings of the most refined *Pagans*, who never meddled with this Problem, but they shew it was too hard for them. Some indeed among them do utterly disavow the Belief of any future Existence; but even those that do venture to assert, do it so timorously, and support the Assertion so feebly, that it may pass indeed for guessing and wishing, but hardly, I think, for a well-grounded Persuasion. *Socrates*, who was one of the most discerning among them all, leaves the Point in much Uncertainty, though *Plato* his Reporter is suspected at the same Time to be a Borrower from the *Jews*. *Aristotle*, *Plato's* Scholar, was as doubtful or rather more so than his Master ^a *Tully*, who had sifted all their Notions to the very Bran, can scarce tell where to fix. He is frequently attempting, 'tis true, to prove the Permanency of the Soul after Death, but he is sufficiently sensible of the Difficulty of the Task, and very diffident of his Success.

^a Vid. *Tusculan. Qu. 1. de Senectute, &c.*

And even when he has mustered up all the Arguments he is Master of, he drops the Thing in Proof, or at best takes up with a very mean and unworthy Notion of it; for he places the Happiness of his supposed future State in that immortal Glory (as he calls it) of which he was so vainly fond himself, that he thought those *Worthies* that were departed must needs be infinitely delighted with it. And as for infernal Punishments, he ridicul'd it as the Invention of *Poets* and *Painters*, as it was indeed in some Measure among them: But he moreover exploded it for an absurd Thing in itself, as supposing the Souls of Men to be subject to bodily Sensation and Passion, even after they were out of the Body. And the Resurrection of the Body was no Opinion in Countenance with any of the *Philosophers*. *Pliny* the Naturalist deems it to be an utter Impossibility. And both the *Stoicks* and *Epicureans*, we find in Scripture, made a Mock at it, and counted *St. Paul* but a *Babler*, for preaching up such strange Doctrine.

In short, those that talk best upon this Subject, are by no Means consistent with themselves, but very lame and imperfect in their Notions.

Plutarch, as grave and judicious a Writer as most, cannot bear being compared with himself in this Particular. For in one Place you will find him very solidly arguing, that the Providence of God, and the Immortality of the Soul are both founded upon one Reason; that they must stand and fall together. And taking the latter for granted, therefore he supposes the Distribution of Rewards and Punishments to be annexed to it as a Consequent. So far 'tis well. But then, in another Place, he gives you such a wild, fanciful, gross Description of these Rewards and Punishments, as were enough to shock the Belief of the whole.

He tells you there is a Receptacle for the pious after Death, where the Sun never sets, and there is nothing but flowery Meads, and purling Streams, and all manner of delightful Entertainment and Conversation. But as for the wicked, they are plunged into a prodigious Gulph, and overwhelmed with a Torrent of horrid Darknefs, and buried in eternal Oblivion, if not utter Abolition; but without any bodily Pain, for there are no Remains of the Body, he thinks, after Death that should suffer it.

Upon

Upon the whole Matter, the Speculations of unenlightned and corrupted Nature were very deficient, we find, in this Point. Conjecture and Presumption was the most they could arrive to by this Means; and if they had any solid Reasons whereupon to ground their Belief of a future State, it was mightily weaken'd and obscur'd by the idle Fancies and Imaginations about the Nature of that Happiness or Misery which shall then await Men. I must only remind you, that by what I have said upon this Head, I do not revoke what I laid down at the Beginning, *viz.* that this fundamental Truth, 'tis likely, might at first be discernible by the Light of Reason: For then I spoke of Reason as in its primitive Integrity and State; now I have been speaking of it as in Degeneracy and Corruption. But,

2dly, It remains to be enquired, whether the Revelation of the old Testament was likewise defective in this Particular. And this, I think, it must be allowed it was, not for want of any Sufficiency in itself, but purely through the Mistake and Abuse of a *perverse besotted kind of People*. For as has been above observed, it was so sufficiently notify'd, both

by Reason and immediate Revelation to *Adam*, so remarkably confirmed by the Translation of *Enoch*, and farther enforced by the Tenour of God's Promise to *Abraham*, that there was no need to insert it particularly in the Law of *Moses*. And though that Law was established, as it was, upon Promises and Threats, that were indeed temporal, yet it was well enough adapted to the present Capacity and Condition of that People, in order to train them up to better Things. For as they had been oppressed and dispirited by a long Captivity, and were still to sojourn for 40 Years in the Desert, it was fit their drooping Spirits should be a little cheer'd, and their Dependence upon God encouraged, by setting their Reward near to their View, and not at too great a Distance. And yet they had an Opportunity to be convinced that this Promise of an earthly Inheritance was not absolute and unconditional; for even *Moses* their Leader was not suffered to enter into *Canaan*, as much as he was beloved of God. From whence they might easily and justly enough infer, that God, who delighted to be called *their God*, had some better Thing in Store for those that love and obey him.

But

But alas! they were so perfectly sunk down SER. VII. into Sense, and so enamour'd of these earthly Goods, that they let go the Substance in Fondness to the Shadow. And in process of Time, it became a disputable Point, whether there were any Life after this, or no? The *Sadducees* utterly denied it, as not being revealed in so many Words any where in the *Pentateuch*, which was the only Scripture they admitted: And the *Pharisees* were unable to confute them, as building it purely upon Tradition, the Authority of which the others still rejected. And besides, the *Pharisees* themselves were not agreed concerning the Resurrection of the wicked, and for the Righteous they imagined there would be a sensual Kind of *Paradise* provided, where they were to marry, and feast, and enjoy themselves, just as here they did; which by the way was the Ground of that Objection of the *Woman that had seven Husbands*, with which the *Sadducees* made so brisk an Onset upon our Saviour, as thinking, 'tis like, that he maintained the Doctrine of a Resurrection to come upon the same Principles with the *Pharisees*. And to a People so very incredulous, so perfectly sensualized as this, the

SER. VII.  remoter Revelations before the Law, and the obscurer Types and Figures under it, were likely to prove but very little instructive; nay the more explicate Declarations of the latter *Prophets* were likely enough to run the same Fate with the rest, as being encountered by the same Prejudices, and the same Errors. There was need enough therefore, as the Case stood, of further Evidence and Demonstration, to clear up a Matter that was render'd dubious, partly by ill Reasoning and Misconception about it, and partly by perverse Opposition to it. Enquire we then,

Thirdly, In the third and last Place, how these supposed Defects were supply'd by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And this they are to all Intents and Purposes. For, in the first Place, our *pore-blind* Reason is no longer bewildered in the midst of uncertain Conjectures and Suspicions, or distracted between strong Desires and weak Proofs, and faint Hopes: For God has put an End to all our Doubts by his own direct Determination.

Nor is the Truth any longer now wrap'd up in Veils, or represented to us by Shadows;
but

but all the most eminent Passages and Occurrences in the Old Testament relating to this Matter are now illustrated and apply'd to our Hands, as may be seen particularly in our *Saviour's* Reply to the *Sadducees*, upbraiding them of Ignorance, even in their own Scripture, and in the 11th to the *Hebrews*, where *Enoch*, and *Abraham*, and *Moses*, and all the *Israelites* that dy'd before their Arrival at *Canaan*, and the seven Brethren are produced as Instances to prove that there necessarily must be a Life to come, and that all these lived in this Faith, and all (except *Enoch*, who was translated alive) died in this Hope.

And we have moreover a new Revelation superadded, so bright, so full, so very express and solemn, that *Obstinacy* it self can scarce gainsay it, and affected *Incredulity* can hardly disbelieve it. Take one Instance among many, from the Solemnity of our *Saviour's* Answer to *disconsolate Martha*, *John xi.* grieving for her deceased Brother, and not expecting he should rise again, till the Resurrection of the last Day, of which 'tis probable she had been before instructed by our blessed Lord. But *Jesus said unto her* (xi. 25.) *I am the Resurrection and the Life:*
He

SER. VII. *He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live* (directly asserting another Life after this) (Ver. 26.) *And whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die* (as directly declaring that Life to be immortal.) And thus again we are told (*John v. 28, 29*) *That the Hour is coming, in which all that are in their Graves shall hear his Voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the Resurrection of Life; and they that have done evil, to the Resurrection of Damnation,* (declaring that both the good and the bad shall rise again, tho' to a very different State of Life.) For as we find it in *Matt. xxv. 46.* *These shall go away into everlasting Punishments, but the righteous into Life eternal.* Where the Perpetuity of that State with Respect to both is most expressly asserted. And Moreover 3. we have a most miraculous Confirmation of all this, by the Resurrection of Jesus, and his raising *many of the dead Bodies of the Saints that slept*, and his enabling his *Apostles* to work the like Wonders. For herein he is declared to *be the Son of God with Power* (*Rom. i. 4.*) This shews how well he is qualify'd to execute that Judgment that is committed to him; nay, 'tis an Assurance

furance given unto all Men, that God will judge *the World in Righteousness, by the Man whom he hath ordained, and eminently distinguished by raising him from the Dead.* And now we know what the exceeding Greatness of God's Power is, by this astonishing Example of it: We know that *Christ* is the *First-born from the Dead, the first Fruits of those that slept,* and consequently, that all *shall be made alive in him, every Man in his own Order, that our mortal Bodies shall be quickened, our vile Bodies changed, that they may be like unto his glorious Body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.* We know what Alteration we shall undergo, for, *This Corruptible must put on Incorruption, this Mortal must put on Immortality. It is sown indeed in Dishonour, but it shall be raised in Glory: It is sown in Weakness, but it shall be raised in Power: It is sown a natural Body, but it shall be rais'd a spiritual Body.* And suitable to this glorify'd State, so shall our Enjoyments be all pure and spiritual; for the Children of the Resurrection are equal to the Angels. We shall be entertained with blissful Visions, and transporting Contemplations; for we shall

SER. VII. *shall know, as we are known; we shall be united unto God by the most marvellous and amazing Love, whereby we shall dwell in him, and he in us: We shall be associated to an innumerable Company of Angels, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect, and to God the Judge of all; whose Justice to all Mankind, whose especial Mercy to those that are found worthy, and all whose glorious Perfections shall be the perpetual Object of our devoutest Wonder, Praise and Adoration. And as we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, to receive every one the Things done in the Body, whether they be good or bad; so we are sufficiently made acquainted with the Terror of the Lord in the sad, irrevocable Doom of impenitent Sinners to everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels, where they shall be continually weeping and wailing, and gnashing their Teeth, and gnawing their Tongues, and expressing their fruitless Remorse and helpless Despair, in horrid Blasphemies and Execrations, to all Eternity.*

In the Upshot of all, therefore, we may safely conclude, that wherein soever the Notices of a future State, whether derived from
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the Light of Nature, or former *Revelations* SER. VII.
might be defective, we have an abundant Supplement to those Defects in the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*. For the Matter in Question is there revealed with as much Perspicuity as can be desired, as much Certainty as 'tis possible to have before we make the final Experiment. And the different Lot of the *Righteous* and the *Wicked* is as distinctly set forth, and both the Kind and Duration of the Happiness and Misery of each as expressly declared, and as clearly described as need to be. So that there is nothing wanting to the Conviction of our Judgments, and the Establishment of our Faith; nothing left for us to do, but to lead our Lives answerably to this Belief and Expectation.

Give me Leave now to make some few brief Reflections upon what has been said, and I shall soon dismiss you. And

I/ It may be observed from the foregoing Discourse, that God in Effect did never leave himself without a Witness, nor the World without a Monitor, of this fundamental Principle, *viz.* the Belief of a future State. For as it was originally discernible by the Light of Reason, so the Defects of eclipsed Reason were supply'd by early Revelation, and the

SER. VII. Truth of the Thing confirmed by wonderful Examples: And when the Purport of this Revelation began to be mistaken, and all this Evidence to be overlook'd, then the World was enlighten'd with a brighter and more perfect Revelation, that has cleared up all our Doubts and Suspicions. So that in Truth there is no Period of Time to be assign'd, in which the competent Means of Information were wanting.

At least there have always been such Significations of this important Truth, as were Ground sufficient to condemn Men for living Lives inconsistent with such an Expectation, and justify God for punishing them as they deserv'd.

But yet it must be thankfully own'd by us, that are *Christians*, that 'tis the Gospel at last that gives us the most convincing, and determining Assurance of it; and to think otherwise is highly injurious to the Honour of the Gospel, and its blessed Author. And in this Particular we have just reason to tax the Vanity and Disingenuity of those, who have been bred *Christians*, and yet are commenced *Deists*. For they, forsooth, profess the Belief of a future and immortal State, they are clear they say in this point, but then they embrace

it only as a Principle of *Natural Religion*, SER. VII.
and scorn to be beholden to *Revelation* for it.
So much wiser are these vain Men in their
own Conceits, than *Pythagoras*, *Socrates*, or
Plato, or any of the ancient *Philosophers*
before Christ, who after all their Disquisition-
ons remain'd in great Perplexity and Uncer-
tainty concerning this Matter. Whereas 'tis
observable, that *Philosophy* it self began to
assert it more clearly and positively, after the
Publication of the *Gospel*, without which
these modern *Pretenders*, I believe, would be
as much to seek as any of their *Heathen Pre-*
decessors. For though they are not so inge-
nuous as to own it; they are plainly indebted
to the *Gospel Revelations*, and the early Ac-
quaintance they have had with it, for the
Clearness of those very Notions, which they
hug as the happy Discovery of their own
exalted Wit and Reason.

2dly, If *Life* and *Immortality* be set in so
clear a Light by the *Gospel*, as appears from
the foregoing Discourse, we may from hence
gather, how obstinately blind, or profligately
wicked those Men are, who will presume to
call themselves *Christians*, and yet dispute
away the *Christians* greatest Privilege, their
own

Own Immortality, maintaining that the Soul and Life is all one, and that Man is wholly *mortal*, even as the *Beasts that perish*; nay, and the Scripture itself, as if it were not sufficiently clear in this case, must be wrested and distorted, and unnaturally forc'd to speak in favour of this absurd and impious Opinion. Which is so wretched a Management of so wicked a Cause, that it can pass for no other than *Atheism* in Disguise, and that Disguise a very thin one too. But whatever might be the Design of those that have of late advanc'd this bold Absurdity, the Tendency of it is apparently pernicious, and directly undermines the very Foundations of all Religion.

3dly, If we have such an undoubted Assurance of an *immortal Life*, from the *Gospel*, as has been shewn, this should teach us to avoid an Absurdity in Practice, which is the greatest of all others; and that is for profess *Christians*, who entertain no Doubt concerning a future State, to live as carelessly and thoughtlessly, nay as lewdly and impiously as if they were altogether unaccountable, and had nothing to hope or fear in Futurity. It is but a foolish *Exultation*, and expresses but
a brutal

a brutal kind of Satisfaction, that Saying of SER.VII.
the *Epicureans*, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.* (1 Cor. xv. 32.) But 'tis a more excusable Folly in them, because it consists better with their Scheme, who reckon upon nothing after Death, and therefore would make Life but one continued Frolick. But it would be monstrous in a professed *Christian* to fall in with the same lewd Cant, and say, *Let us eat and drink, for we must live for ever.* Let us make the most of this World, whatever becomes of the next: Let us give a loose to all our wildest Appetites, and spend our whole Time in *Revelling and Drunkenness, in Chambering and Wantonness*, for 'tis but being damn'd for it to Eternity. I say, this would sound monstrously out of a *Christian's* Mouth: And yet though in Words we dare not avow so much, our Actions proclaim it aloud. For do we not openly allow our selves (too many of us) in most of those Things, of which St. Paul tells us peremptorily, that *they that do such Things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God?* Is it not very fashionable now a-days to be very licentious, and very profane? and does it not pass for a shrewd

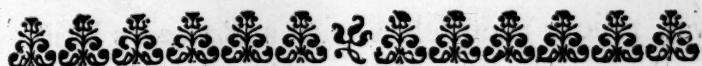
SER. VII. Piece of Wit, to make a Jest of Heaven and Hell, and deride sacred Things and Persons? Is it not reckoned a genteel Accomplishment to be *mighty to drink strong Drink*? And a Mark of Distinction to be above the uneasy Restraint and Confinement of *Conjugal Affection* and *Fidelity*? Is it not accounted a Point of Honour, to snatch the Revenge out of God's Hands, and take it into our own? And a certain Sign of a *dastard* Spirit at the same Time, to *fear God, rather than Man*, even to *fear him, that is able to destroy both Soul and Body in Hell*? I say, are not these the notorious Practices, and lawless Liberties, that are used by too many of those who profess to believe the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*, and expect that he should come to be their Judge.

But Beloved, let us not be so willingly deceived, when the Error is like to prove so fatal to us; for even whilst *we walk in the Way of our Hearts, and in the Sight of our Eyes*, and follow the Swing of our own Lusts; we know, (nay we cannot but know) *that for all these Things God will bring us into Judgment*, Oh! therefore *let us awake to Righteousness, and not Sin*, not dare to sin on in so much Light, and in the Face of so much Danger.

ger. But let *us walk as the Children of Light*, SER. VII.
and Heirs of Immortality, lest we should be
deservedly excluded at last into *outer Dark-*
ness, and that very Immortality (the happy
Earnest of which we have in the Resurrecti-
on of our Saviour Christ) and which was
designed for the *Christian's* highest Privilege,
and inestimable Reward; should prove a
Curse to us in the End, and we should be
forced to bemoan the Continuance of our
own wretched Existence in everlasting, ne-
ver ceasing Torments.

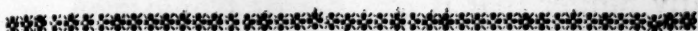
From which sad Doom, God of his infinite
Mercy deliver us all, through Jesus Christ,
who is the Resurrection and the Life. Amen.





S E R M O N VIII.

The Uncertainty of a Death-Bed Repentance.



NUMB. xxiii. 10. latter Part of the Verse.

Let me die the Death of the Righteous, and let my last End be like his.

THESE are the well known Words SERM. VIII. of Balaam, an impious Diviner; after he had been unexpectedly alarmed by the Voice of a *dumb Ass*, and terrify'd by the *Angel of God*; and was now driven by a Sense of his own Guilt to take Sanctuary from the Conscience of an ill-spent Life, in the Hopes of a penitent and comfortable Death. And but few Sinners there are so prodigiously hardened, or utterly forsaken,

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but

but who will sometimes in a thinking Interval, relieve themselves with a *Balaam's Wish*, and even propose to die penitently; and hope to do it comfortably too; though they adventure to live never so profligately.

And how transient soever such Thoughts as these may happen to be, how ineffectual soever such kind of *Wishes* for the most Part are, there is certainly Weight and Force enough in the Words before us, to convince any Sinner that is capable of Conviction, of the Folly and Danger of his Ways, and of the Reasonableness and Necessity of Repentance; and to spur him out of his lazy Delays, and at once to hasten and secure his Conversion and Recovery. And for the better Satisfaction and Direction of all whom it may concern, I shall proceed somewhat more distinctly to shew,

First, The true Ground and Reason of this Wish of *Balaam*, in which the Generality of Mankind are so ready to concur. And

Secondly, I shall point out the most safe and expeditious Way of bringing this Wish to good Effect.

First,

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First, I shall shew the true Ground and Reason of this Wish of *Balaam*, in which the Generality of Mankind are so ready to concur. *Let me die the Death of the Righteous, and let my last End be like his.* SERM.
VIII.

And it is grounded (I conceive) partly upon a Presumption of an Assurance of a future Judgment; and a State of Rewards and Punishments after this Life is ended; and partly upon a Supposition (agreeable both to Reason and Fact) that the Righteous, as being best prepared for Judgment, and best qualified for the other State, must die with more Composedness and Comfort, and hopeful Expectation, than other Men do.

1st, I say it is grounded upon a Presumption or Assurance of a future Judgment, and a State of Rewards and Punishments after this Life is ended.

I know indeed, that some are willing to confine the *Seer's* Wish only to this present Life, as if the Sum of his Desires had been to live to a good old Age, and then to die in Peace, and to be a Sharer in the Privilege which God had expressly promised to the *Israelites*, upon their diligent Observation of the Law: Which 'tis conjectured, he might most passionately

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VIII.

ly desire, as having some Foresight perhaps of that untimely End, which we find he afterwards came to. (*Num. xxxi. 8.*) This Opinion is greedily taken up by some, who love to weaken any thing that tends to prove the Antiquity and Universality of the Notion of a *future State*. But then the Addition of these remarkable Words, the descending to the mention of the Death of the Righteous, and the fixing his own Choice there, even that *his last End may be like theirs*, all this strongly implies, that he was not without a Foresight, that the Righteous were entitled to greater Favours and Blessings, than any this Life could afford.

Nor do I think my self concerned to deny, that there may be Room, and possibly some Colour of Reason for such Conjecture: But yet notwithstanding *Grotius*, who is not wont to be over liberal upon such Occasions, will allow, and does indeed assert, that there is a deeper and a more important Sense couched under these Words; namely, that the Condition of the Righteous will be happy even after this Life, and that their Death and Manner of dying is eligible and desirable on that Account, as being the Introduction into a State

of

of Happiness, not of Misery; and after this happy State *Balaam* sends his longing Wishes. He had lived ill, 'tis true, and deserved ill; and this he was conscious of, but he hoped however to *die well*; he wished at least to make a good Conclusion. So far his present Conviction, and the Apprehension of what was to follow, could not but carry him.

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VIII.

It is not material to enquire, whence *Balaam* should have a Notion of a future State, whether from Reason, or Tradition, or by some distant Reason reflected from those brighter Revelations, or Communications, that might have been vouchsafed to the Worshipers of the true God? This is a Question too nice to be entred into at present; but, however he might come by the Notion, 'tis plain to me, that he must have an Eye to it; because if he had spoke only with regard to Length of Days, and secular Prosperity, he would have expressed himself ('tis more than probable) more directly and explicitly: He would not sure have fixed his Thoughts only upon the last concluding Act of his Life, as if that were all; or at least the chief of his Care and Concern. He might indeed upon the Supposition of their promised temporal Felicity,

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Felicity, have wish'd to have lived the Life of the Righteous: But why to die their Death? Why to make his Exit like them? For if there were no Life after this, if Death were utmost Period of our very Being, there could be no such remarkable Difference betwixt the Death of the Righteous, and the Wicked; and consequently no Reason for *Balaam's* solicitous Thoughts about the Manner of his Death.

For without respect to Futurity, Death itself is but a frightful Nothing; and *the same Issue must of Necessity await the Righteous and the Wicked*; both must be reduced to a like State of Insensibility and Annihilation.

But now supposing that there is to be an after State, and an after Reckoning, and as Death leaves Men, Judgment will find them; and conclude them for ever under unchangeable Happiness, or Misery unsufferable, and unavoidable; I say, supposing this, it infinitely concerns Men to be wise in Time, and to *consider their latter End*, and to put themselves into a Posture of dying so, that they may not be doomed to a second Death of endless Torments hereafter.

And

And it was under such Apprehensions as these, 'tis most reasonable to think, that *Balaam* cry'd out so pathetically, *Let me die the Death of the Righteous, and let my last End be like his.* SERM.
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He looked upon Death to be, as it really is, at once the Determination of this present mortal Life, and the Commencement of another that is immortal; and being sensible that he had made no suitable Provision for so great a Change in his Life past, he wished however, nay he could not but wish (if wishing would have done) to dye better than he had lived, and to arrive at the End at last, how much soever he had neglected the Means.

The primary Ground therefore of *Balaam's* Wish I take to be the Presumption that he had of a future State of Rewards and Punishments; and it is so agreeable to the natural Sentiments of Mankind, that every body that does but think of it cannot but wish the same, and that with abundance of Reason. For.

2dly, It is to be supposed, pursuant to the Belief of a future State (and 'tis also agreeable both to Reason and Fact) that the Righteous, in regard they are the best prepared for Judgment,

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VIII.

Judgment, and best qualified for the other State; must die with more Composedness and Comfort, and hopeful Expectations than other Men do. And this is evident, I say, First from Reason. For what is it that makes Death so terrible, and the Prospect of it so uncomfortable? It is not meerly the Uneasiness of a Separation between Soul and Body, or the natural Aversion that we have to it, or the Intenseness of the Pain, that attends such a Dissolution? Alas no! it is the dreadful Expectation of Judgment to ensue, accompanied with the boding Presage of an evil Conscience, that knows its own Deserts, and dooms itself aforehand. 'Tis Sin, 'tis Sin that is the fatal Sting of Death; 'tis Judgment, 'tis Vengeance, that makes its Terrors so amazing; and for those that have lived thoughtlessly or carelessly, or loosely or licentiously, no Wonder, when they are under the Arrest of Death, if they begin to cast up their lame Accounts with Fear; no Wonder if Dejection and Despondence lay hold on them, and Astonishment and Horror overwhelm them; for *if their own Hearts condemn them, God is greater than their Hearts, and knoweth all Things.* And it is, it must be

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be a *fearful Thing to fall into the Hands of the* SERM.
living God, the supreme Judge of all Men, VIII.
and all Things, and the severe Avenger of all
Unrighteousness.

And herein lies the great Difference between the Wicked and the Righteous, when once they come to die. The former are utterly unprepared for it, and therefore they are dismay'd and confounded at it; but the latter have made it the main Business of their Lives to provide for Death, it has been their constant Study and Exercise, to *have always a Conscience void of Offence both towards God, and towards Men*; they keep up a stated Entercourse between God and their own Souls, and take a strict and regular Account of all their Actions; and wherein soever they happen to offend, through the Fraud and Malice of the Devil, or their own carnal Will and Frailness, they redeem their Error, and recover themselves by a timely Repentance, and sue out their Pardon at the Hands of God, their God and only Saviour: And being always in this Posture, with their Lamps ready trimmed, they can receive the Summons of Death without much Surprise, and can look upon it with an erect Counte-

nance :

SERM.
VIII.

nance: They know indeed, that *after Death comes Judgment*, and that they must appear before the dread Majesty of Heaven and Earth: But then they have always lived as in God's Presence, and under an awful Sense of that high Tribunal, to which they stand accountable; and to the best of their Abilities, they have prepared and cleared their Accounts (at least with the gracious Allowances of a compassionate Redeemer) and not being conscious to themselves of any Wickedness unrepented of, they humbly hope they may have a Confidence towards God, and a Confidence not to be shaken by Death itself.

And thus we see, that the Righteous have a reasonable Foundation for Serenity and Chearfulness, at their dying Hour, even because *their Hope is full of a blessed Immortality*.

2dly, This is certainly true in Fact; the Temper and Spirit of the Righteous at the Approach of Death is remarkably different from that of the Wicked: And they do actually enjoy that Serenity and Calmness upon their Minds, which the others are wholly Strangers to, and cannot purchase at any Rate.

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This is sufficiently known to the *Guides of Souls*, those who have been called in to assist at the last Minutes of dying Men, and made acquainted with their nearest Secrets. They can bear Witness for such, as have been exemplary for a holy and unblamable Conversation, and a constant Perseverance in it; with what a chearful Resignation they have welcomed the News of Death; with what Tranquillity they have expected the Time of their Departure; with what a Spring of Consolation they have been refreshed under it, and with what Transports of Joy they have looked through the gloomy Scenes of the Grave, up to the bright Regions above, and the heavenly Inheritance, to which they were hastening.

And they also are the sorrowful Witnesses on the other hand, of the stinging Remorses, and inexpressible Anguish, and Terror and Horror, and Desperation (more astonishing than a thousand Deaths) that departing Sinners have been hurried away with. These are Truths that cannot fairly be questioned, although it may indeed be colourably objected; that the different Exit of good and bad Men is not so observable as it might be

4 thought;

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thought ; because 'tis also observed, that good Men are frequently as much disturbed at the Approach of Death, as those that are worse ; and bad Men as little as those that are better.

But to this I answer first, that the Stander-by, who cannot pretend to *discern the Heart*, has no such certain Way to distinguish the Good from the Bad, but that he may sometimes be deceived. And a Man may pass for a sincere good Man, and carry a fair Reputation as such in the World, and yet be tainted nevertheless from some secret Wickedness, which when he comes to die will gnaw inwardly upon his Conscience, and discompose his Rest, and make his Case appear doubtful and disconsolate, both to himself and others. But this Discomposure is no Objection to the Truth of what I have laid down, because it apparently proceeds from want of Sincerity at bottom.

Nay, I will own, that even a sincere good *Christian*, as being Flesh and Blood, like other Men, may, through the Weakness of his Constitution, or the Strength of his Disease, be oppressed with Doubts and Fears, and interrupted in the Exercise of his Faith and Hope, and so die without any extraordinary

nary Transports, or Significations of great Affurances; but then this is an Impediment purely accidental, and owing to the Body, and therefore I think no reasonable Objection.

And on the contrary, when it is pretended, that bad Men often leave the World without any such Apprehensions, or at least without the sensible Signs of any such, it must be considered, that in all Probability, many of those Men are far from dying comfortably; silently they may, by reason of the Shame and Confusion they are in; fullenly they may, by reason of their Impenitence and Despondency; but 'tis to be feared that they feel those inward Agonies, which perhaps their Tongues cannot express; or if they do not, 'tis perfect Sottishness and Insensibility that defends them from it, and that God knows, is but a wretched Foundation of Peace or Comfort.

And after all, this is certain and uncontestable, if you set aside all accidental Lets and Hindrances, and suppose the good Man and the bad to have equally the Use of their Reason and Reflection in their dying Moments. The good Man that is truly such, will, and

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does (observe it when you will) enjoy an unspeakable Satisfaction in the Conscience of a well spent Life, and the Prospect of his future Reward. And the bad Man, that is notoriously so, is racked and tormented with the stabbing Thoughts of his own remediless Folly, and a certain looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation.

And this is sufficient to discriminate the Righteous from the Wicked, as to the Manner of their Exit; and 'tis enough to induce any Man to join in *Balaam's* Wish, that he might have the Privilege to *die the Death of the Righteous, and make his last End like his*. And so much for the true Grounds or Reasons of this Wish. I proceed,

Secondly, To point out the only safe and expeditious Way of bringing this Wish to good Effect.

And this is a Thing richly worth our knowing and considering. For *Balaam* wished, and wished in vain; for he continued in his Wickedness notwithstanding, and was cut off for it by a violent and untimely Death. (*Numb. xxxi. 8.*) And too many alas! there are, who like *Balaam*, when they are startled
by

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VIII.

by some divine Judgment, or awakened by the Terror of imminent Death, would gladly compound for an easy and comfortable one, as far as fruitless wishing will contribute to it: But ease them once of their present Fears, and their Wishes soon vanish into Air, and are seldom or never seconded by any hearty Endeavour. But to convince all such of an Error, that will otherwise prove fatal to them, and to rouse them out of their Supineness and Laziness, I must inform them once for all, that there is but one effectual Way to crown their Wishes with Success: For if they are in good earnest desirous to *die the Death of the Righteous*, they *must* be content to *live the Life of the Righteous*; if they are willing to reap the Comfort of the one, they must also submit to the Toil and Trouble of the other. And that this is of absolute and indispensable Necessity, will absolutely appear,

1st. From the Reason of the Thing itself.
2^{dly}, From the express Terms and Conditions of the Gospel. 3^{dly}, From the Fallaciousness and Insufficiency of any other Expedient that can be thought of.

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1st, It will appear from the Reason of the Thing itself. For what is it that makes Death less terrible, or more supportable to the Righteous, than it is to other Men : It is not because he is better supply'd with natural Courage, or free from that natural Aversion which all Men have to dying ; it is not because he is less sensible of Pain or Danger ; but 'tis because his whole Life has been but one continued Preparation for it ; it is because he has weighed the Consequences of it well, and impress'd upon his Mind a constant Sense of that unerring Judgment that is to follow after, and endeavour'd so to comport himself and his Actions as might best approve the Sincerity, though not the Perfection of his Obedience, before his just, but merciful Judge : It is lastly because upon the frequentest and strictest Examination of himself, his *Heart condemns him not* of any known Sin, wilfully indulged, or impenitently continued in, and for such as through Frailty he has at any time committed, he has recalled them, as much as lay in him, by a timely and unfeigned Repentance ; and therefore he hopes, that *Jesus Christ the Righteous* will be both his Advocate and Propitiation, and that he *shall be cleansed*

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from all Unrighteousness, in the Blood of his crucified Saviour. This, this is the only Support of a good Man's Confidence and Consolation, when he comes to die. This it is that enables him to smile at Death, under its most gasty Appearance, and to despise and triumph over all its Terrors.

And whosoever is not provided of this needful Furniture, whosoever is not thus ready with his Accounts, and prepared for Judgment, as well as Death, can never think of the Approach of either, without dreadful Apprehensions, can never undergo them without everlasting Confusion. So absolutely necessary is a holy Life, and that in the very Nature of the Thing, in order to a comfortable and happy Death; which will be farther apparent,

2dly, From the express Terms and Conditions of the Gospel, which always require a holy Life, and a willing and sincere Obedience; and promises no Happiness, nay threatens and denounces eternal Misery to those that neglect the due Performance of it. To this Purpose are those awaking Passages: *If ye will enter into Life, keep the Commandments.* Matt. xix. 17. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord,* (with an ineffective Wish)

The Uncertainty of a

shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven. Matt. vii. 21. Without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord. Hebr. xii. 14. God will render to every Man according to his Works: To them who by patient Continuance in Well-doing seek for Glory and Honour, and Immortality; eternal Life: But to them that are contentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness; Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, upon every Soul that doth evil. Rom. ii. 6, 7, 8.

And to prevent our building a false Confidence upon any other Ground, the Precepts are guarded with such like Cautions as this: *Be not deceived, God is not mocked: For whatsoever a Man soweth, that shall he also reap. And he that to the Flesh soweth, shall of the Flesh reap Corruption; and he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap Life everlasting. Galat. vi. 7, 8.* From all which 'tis indisputably clear, that these, and these only, are the explicate Conditions of that Salvation that is tendered to us in the Gospel of Christ, and that we shall be finally judged by the same Gospel; that if we have taken care to discharge our Duty according to the Terms prescribed,

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prescribed, we shall be most graciously acquitted, and gloriously rewarded; if not, we shall be justly condemned, and severely punished.

And this is the only safe Rule that we can judge ourselves by in the mean time: This the only fixed Basis, upon which our Hope and Assurance can rest itself at the Hour of Death. For if we can acquit our selves by the Answer of a good Conscience, and say from our Hearts, that we have in Compliance with the Overtures, and in Concurrence with the Aids of divine Grace, endeavoured to live up to the Laws of the Gospel, 'tis well and good; we may die with Comfort: But if we are conscious that we have *neglected this great Salvation*, and despised the equitable Condition upon which it is offered, then must our Death needs be comfortless, and our Case helpless too (ordinarily speaking) because *there is no other Name under Heaven* (if the Gospel be true) *by which we shall be saved*. And this will be cleared up beyond Contradiction in the

3^d Place, From the Insufficiency and Fallaciousness of any other Expedient that can be made use of. But I shall not now

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stand to enumerate all the Fallacies that People may be apt to obtrude upon themselves, in the great Concern of their own Souls. Nor shall I encounter in particular the wild Conceits of the *Antinomians*, who rely upon the Righteousness of Christ performed in their stead, they think without any Obligation upon them to follow his Example, they shall be saved: Or the unwarrantable Opinions and Practices of the *Romanists*, who lay the main Stress upon Obedience to holy Church, and the Observation of her Rites and Injunctions, to the manifest Detriment of the *weightier Matters of the Law, Judgment, and the Love of God*. I say, I shall not trouble myself to confute these particular Errors, which (I hope) are not likely to mislead any body here. But there is another, and a more general Mistake, that is of very pernicious Influence, and has betray'd many thousands of heedless Souls into Ruin. And that is a Presumptuous Reliance upon a late and Death-Bed Repentance, as a sufficient Compensation for an ill-spent Life, and what will be available for Pardon and Salvation. Now if I can prove, that this is a meer *broken Reed*, and not to be trusted, I shall farther evince the Necessity

Death-Bed Repentance.

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cessity of a holy Life, and drive the Sinner SERM.
VIII.
from this miserable mistaken Refuge.

And that a Death-Bed Repentance is not, cannot be the solid Foundation of Hope or Comfort, may be briefly shewn from these two undeniable Reasons; *1st*, Because there is no rational Ground to believe, that such Repentance is true, and real, and acceptable with God. And *2^{dly}*, Because the supposed Penitent (if it were so) cannot have the Satisfaction of knowing it, or depending upon it before he dies. And

1st, There is no rational Ground to believe, that a Death-Bed Repentance is true and real. Repentance must at least imply a deep and serious Sense of Sin, and an utter Abhorrence of it; and a total Change of the Mind, seconded with a deliberate Resolution of changing the former Course of Life, and testifying an unfeigned Love of God, and a filial Fear, by obeying his holy Laws, and *bringing forth Fruit unto Holiness.*

And can it reasonably be expected, that all this Work should be done in a few languishing Moments? That the whole Bent of the Inclinations should be changed just on the sudden? That inveterate Habits should be
rooted

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rooted out, and new ones superinduced and established in their room; and all by the Help of a few hasty Reflections, and troubled Thoughts, concerning ones past Life, confusedly express'd in some general Confession, and short Petitions for Mercy? Is it credible, that he who was but a few Days ago intemperate, lascivious, covetous, or revengeful, should all at once be mortified in his Affections, and become temperate and chaste, liberal and charitable? That he who has been all along a Hater or Blasphemer of God, a profest Disputer against his Being, or at best a Doubter concerning it, should now at last, upon one single and sudden Warning, adhere to him, with a firm and lively Faith, and be transported with Love, and desire to see and enjoy him?

Alas! alas! these mighty Changes are too violent to be natural; and Grace is not wont to force Nature, or to work by a sudden and irresistible Impulse.

The Instances of an *extemporaneous Conversion* are very rare, but two in the whole History of the Gospel, and those attended with Circumstances so very peculiar, that there is little or no room to hope for the like Vouchsafements,

Death-Bed Repentance.

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VIII.

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safements, and less Reason to think, that the Repinings, Lamentations, and Recantations of procrastinating Sinners make their Case at all parallel to that of the *Thief on the Cross*, or Saint *Paul's* in his *Journey to Damascus*. And as it's hardly possible there should be any flattering Hopes upon Examples so perfectly singular, and extraordinary; so in most ordinary Cases 'tis shrewdly to be suspected, that these Shews of Repentance upon a Death-Bed are but the Effect of a great Fright, and not the Tokens of a real Conversion. This is rendered but too probable, by the unfortunate Relapse of but too many that happen to survive. For set Death and Hell but once at a distance from them again, and their Prayers and Vows are streightway forgotten, and their real *Apostacy* is almost as sudden as was their pretended Conversion.

So little Evidence is there, generally speaking, for the Reality of a Death-Bed Repentance, and as little Reason to conclude, that it will be accepted by God. For Repentance cannot be compleat, or worthy of God's Acceptance, unless he himself shall please to afford us the Means of his assisting Grace. And how is it to be thought, that they who have
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SERM. turned a deaf Ear to the Threats and Pro-
VIII. mises of the Gospel, that have been barren
 and unfruitful in the use of his Sacraments
 and other Ordinances, that have been regard-
 less of the Checks of their own Consciences,
 and the Motions of God's good Spirit, and all
 the divine Warnings, and gracious Opportu-
 nities that they have been favoured with for
 40 or 50 Years together; I say, how is it to
 be thought, that such refractory Sinners
 should be still attended with the Assistance
 of God's Grace, and kindly accepted, even
 at their dying Hours. It is much more rea-
 sonable to think, and much more justly to be
 feared, that their Neglect and Refusal of the
 precious Means will now at last be punished
 with a total Deprivation, and a final Deser-
 tion.

And such Repentance as this, that Men
 have such slender Reason to think will be ac-
 cepted, or rather too much to fear the con-
 trary, can hardly afford any solid Comfort at
 that time of Day. Nay it cannot to be sure,
 if we consider,

2dly, That the supposed Penitent, were his
 Repentance never so real and acceptable, can
 never have the Satisfaction of knowing it, and
 depending

Death-Bed Repentance.

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depending upon it before he dies. For it is SERM.
VIII. impossible for the Man himself to make any certain Judgment that it is so.

He may 'tis true feel an inward Compunction, and a very bitter Sorrow; for any Man would be sorry to see himself in the very Clutches of Death and Damnation. But whether this will amount to a perfect Contrition, or will be effectual to Salvation, is very much to be doubted. For if the meer Dread of Damnation, and the Grief conceived thereupon, were enough to save one from it, who would not be saved? Who indeed could be damned, but those that are snatched away suddenly, without any Warning, or die perfectly stupified, or raging and distracted? And even though we should allow this Sorrow to be deeper rooted, and better grounded, and accompanied with a Love of God for his Name's Sake, and a Hatred of Sin for its own Sake; I say, granting it to be so; yet that it is so, or will be so accepted, is a Secret that he that is most concerned to know, can never make himself Master of. For he has not Time to try the Experiment to Satisfaction; and he must needs be sensible that many Men at the Apprehension of
Death

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Death have made Vows, seemingly as strong, and bound themselves with Vows as solemn as his can be, who yet upon Recovery have soon *started aside, like a broken Bow*: A plain Proof that those Resolutions and Vows were merely the Effect of that Force or Constraint which their present Fears laid upon them, and no Indication of their Repentance.

And therefore such a Penitent as this must needs remain altogether unsatisfied about his own Condition, and die in sad Anxiety and Perplexity, with all the Apprehensions of Guilt about him, and the same dismal Expectations as if the Grave led directly down to Hell: For so it may, for ought he does, or can know to the contrary. And such amazing Doubts, such cruel Fears as these, must needs leave the dying Soul stript of all solid Comfort at the Time of the greatest Necessity. For a Death-Bed Repentance, take it at the very best, is a dry Cistern that affords no Refreshment.

And if the Sinner would lay a firm and stable Foundation for his Hope of Pardon and everlasting Life; if he would purchase a Treasure of true Consolation, that may be of Service in the critical Moment, he must
secure

Death-Bed Repentance.

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secure it to himself by an early Piety, or at least cast about for it by a timely Repentance, the Fruits of which may appear in all manner of godly Conversation. For when all is done, there is no safe Expedient of dying comfortably, without living religiously.

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VIII.

And now for a Conclusion of this whole Discourse, let us all be exhorted in two Words not to cavil and dispute away one of the most powerful Motives to a holy Life; that is our own Immortality, as the manner of some is, who are worse *Prophets* (I may venture to say) than even *Balaam* was. But let us firmly persuade our selves of this fundamental Truth, that there is a State of just Retribution after the Expiration of the short Term we have here; and that this Life is but a State of Probation, in which, accordingly as we acquit our selves, so shall we be consigned to everlasting Happiness or Misery hereafter. And let this convince us, how nearly, how vastly it concerns us, to make the best Improvement of that Proportion of Time which is here allotted to us. Let us consider, that our All, our Eternity depends upon it; and therefore let us make it the Business of our whole Lives to prepare for that

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VIII.

great Change which we must undergo by Death. Let us not flatter our selves with fond and fallacious Hopes, that this Preparation may be sufficiently made, and all Danger seasonably enough provided against, by the disturbed and confused Thoughts, which the nearer Apprehension and Approach of Death is wont to excite. For besides that, it is in it self a doubtful Point, whether any Thing of this Nature will amount to a true and an available Repentance; it is on the other Hand too plain, that those who so adventurously trust to it, can never assure themselves with any Satisfaction, that it is real, or acceptable. It is in vain therefore to hope to find any solid Comfort in Death, unless we lay a good Foundation for it in our Life-time, either by the happy Beginnings of an early Piety, and a constant Course and Progress in it; or at least by a timely Repentance, that is to be known by its Fruits.

And God grant, that we may all make the necessary Provision by times, and take care so to live, and so to die, that living and dying we may be the Lord's.

Now

Death-Bed Repentance.

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Now to God the Father, God the Son, ^{SERM.}
and God the Holy Ghost, Three Persons, ^{VIII.}
but One God, be ascribed, as is due, all
Praise, Glory, Might, Majesty, and Domi-
nion, now, henceforth and for evermore,
Amen.



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S E R-

of New to God the Father, Christ the Son,
and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.
On the 1st of January, 1861, I, the undersigned,
do hereby certify that the following is a true and
correct copy of the original as the same appears
in the records of the State of New York.

Witness my hand and seal this 1st day of January,
1861.

Attest:
The Secretary of the State.

John C. Thompson,
Secretary of the State.

Filed for record this 1st day of January, 1861.

Attest:
The Secretary of the State.

John C. Thompson,
Secretary of the State.

Filed for record this 1st day of January, 1861.

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S E R M O N IX.

The Wisdom of looking at those
Things which are not seen.

A Spittal Sermon at the Parish-Church of
St. Sepulchre, on Tuesday in Easter Week,
1725.

2 CORINTH. iv. 18.

*While we look not at the Things which
are seen, but at the Things which
are not seen: for the Things which
are seen, are temporal; but the
Things which are not seen, are eter-
nal.*

S AINT Paul begins this Chapter with SER. IX.
a Profession of that great Sincerity in
preaching the Gospel of Christ, which

Q 2

was

SER. IX. was the Mark of a Spirit truly *Apostolical*.

And, as an unquestionable Proof of this, he sets forth with what unwearied Zeal, what undaunted Courage and Constancy the Apostles had suffered the worst of Evils in so good a Cause. And that which made them so constant to their Cause, was a firm Persuasion, and certain Expectation, of being raised again from the Dead to Life and Glory, by the omnipotent Hand of God, Knowing (as he speaks for himself, Ver. 14.) *that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus.* For which Cause (adds he, Ver. 16.) *we faint not.*—This it was that supported their Spirits under all Extremities; this was it that raised their Hearts and Hopes above all secular Cares and Fears, to the Prospect of a glorious Eternity; which labouring to express (Ver. 17.) he sets above the Reach of Hyperbole: *For our light Affliction* (saith he) *which is but for a Moment, worketh for us * a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory; while we look not* (as the Text has it) *at the Things which are seen, but at the Things which are not seen.*—The certain, tho'

* καὶ ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολήν.

those Things which are not seen.

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distant Prospect they had by Faith, of a future State to Sense invisible, caused them to overlook the present, as being beneath their Aim, and unworthy of their Regard—And Reason good—*For the Things which are seen, are temporal; but the Things which are not seen, are eternal.*

By *the Things which are seen*, we may, in a more indefinite Sense, understand the Good or Evil, the Conveniencies or Inconveniencies attending this present Life; although the Apostle had his Thoughts more directly upon the many and sore Afflictions with which they were then encompassed. By *the Things which are not seen*, we may in like Manner understand the Rewards or Punishments, the Happiness or Misery of the Life to come; although the Apostle had a more immediate Respect to the Recompence of Reward, which was their Consolation and Support under all the Calamities they endured.

Between these two States of Things, as they stand opposed to each other in the Text, there is a manifest Difference, and a mighty Disproportion to be observed: The Difference is in Point of Evidence: For the one is a present, sensible, visible State; the other is not

SER. IX. so. The Disproportion is in Point of Duration : For the one is temporary and transient ; the other is permanent and eternal.

But the Difference in Point of Evidence is exceedingly out-weighed by the Disproportion in Point of Duration.

First, Because the Difference in Point of Evidence between a present visible State, and a future and invisible one, doth not imply any Reason of Doubt or Uncertainty, concerning the Existence of such an invisible State. And

Secondly, Because the Vastness of the Disproportion in Point of Duration, even though it were not so absolutely certain as it will appear to be, that there actually is such a State, makes it infinitely more worthy of our Care and Concern, than any Thing in this transitory World can be.

These two Heads of Doctrine I crave Leave to insist on, before I make my Way to the practical Conclusion, which I shall adapt to this Day's Solemnity. And

First,

those Things which are not seen.

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First, I say, that the Difference in Point SER. IX.
of Evidence between a present and visible
State, and a future and invisible one, doth
not imply any Reason of Doubt or Uncer-
tainty concerning the Existence of such an
invisible State.

And this, I conceive, will not be hard to
make out, if it be considered,

1st, That all Things are not capable of the
same kind of Evidence; and in particular
that the Matter now in Question is incapable
of the Evidence of Sense, and yet may be
true and certain enough notwithstanding.

The Information of Sense hath doubtless
the quickest, and, in some Respects, the
strongest Operation upon the Mind; but this
detracts not from the Certainty or Sufficiency
of other kind of Evidence.

*Maxims of abstracted Reason, and mathe-
matical Axioms*, have not indeed the Evidence
of Sense; nor do they want it: For it is as
evident as the shining of the Sun at Noon-
Day, that both Parts of a Contradiction
cannot be true; and that Equals being added
to Equals, the whole must be equal.

Matters, the Knowledge of which is con-
vey'd to us only by the Testimony of other
credible

SER. IX. credible Persons, have neither sensible Proof, nor mathematical Demonstration to gain the Assent. And yet it is very rationally and firmly believed, that there is such a Place *e. g.* as *Constantinople*. And Men do think themselves, and really are, as certain of this, upon the constant Report of Merchants and Travellers, as if they had actually seen the Place with their own Eyes, or were able to demonstrate, that such a Place there must be. For there is no possible Reason to be imagined, how so many Persons, in different Ages, and distant Countries, should, from Time to Time, so constantly agree in the same Report, unless that Report were absolutely true.

The Use of these Observations is, that it can be no just Exception to the Truth or Certainty of any Thing, that it is not to be proved by this or that sort of Evidence, provided it wants not that very Evidence, which is most proper in the Case; and which cannot be rejected, without asserting or supposing something that is exceeding unreasonable, and shocking even to the common Understanding.

Now this plainly affects the Case in Hand. For the Enquiry is, whether it be indubitably

bly true, that there is a future and invifible SER. IX. State after this prefent Life ended. Whereas, if fuch a State there fhould be, it is impoffible, whilft we dwell in thefe earthly Tabernacles, to arrive at any Knowledge of it through the *Medium* of Senfe. For a diftant and future State is beyond the *Ken* of Senfe; an invifible State is not to be feen with mortal Eyes. But though this is a Cafe that admits not of fenfible Proof, yet it may be capable of fome other Proof, that is every whit as fatisfactory in the Kind; and, if fuch Proof it have, it muft be highly irrational and abfurd to entertain the leaft Doubt concerning it. Be it confidered therefore,

2dly, That the Doctrine of a future State, though it cannot at prefent have the Evidence of Senfe, wanteth not fuch Evidence as is both proper and fufficient in the Kind.

And a very ftrong and cogent Argument for it might be drawn from the very Being and Attributes of God: For if there be a juft, and good, and provident God, as moft affuredly there is, it feems neceffarily to follow, that there muft be a future State of Retribution, wherein Juftice fhall be exactly diftributed, and every Man recompensed according

SER. IX. ing to his Works; which, 'tis notorious, neither is, nor can be adequately done in the present State of Things. This the Light of Nature led the more discerning *Heathens*^a to conclude, whenever they fell into a Vein of reasoning with any thing of Clearness upon the Subject.

But we *Christians* descry the great Truth through a more illuminated *Medium*; we behold it, though afar off, with the stedfast Eye of Faith; we learn it from exprefs Revelation; we ground the Belief of it upon divine Testimony; and we know whom we have believed, even that God, who is able to keep our Souls against that Day; that God, upon whose Will and Power the Matter entirely depends, who cannot be deceived nor defeated, who will not deceive nor defeat us. And he hath sufficiently manifested his Will, and signalized his Power in this Respect, by raising up our Lord Jesus Christ from the Dead, as the First-fruits of them that slept; where-
 by also he hath declared him to be the Son of God with Power; to be the Lord both of Dead and Living; nay, he hath given Assurance unto all Men, that this is the Man

2 Tim. i.
12. 1 Pet.
iv. 19.

1 Corinthe.
xv. 20.

Rom. i. 4.

Rom. xiv.

9.

Acts xvii.

31.

^a Vide *Plato* passim & *Plutarch*.

whom

those Things which are not seen.

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whom he hath ordained to judge the World in SER. IX.
Righteousness at the Day appointed.

And the Resurrection of Christ was so gracious a Condescension to Sense in a Matter of Faith; it was such an indisputable and inimitable Miracle, attended with so many Signs and Wonders done by the first Publishers of it in the Name of Jesus; and with such prodigious Success, and such admirable Effects upon the Hearts and Lives of Multitudes of Believers, who immediately flock'd in to them; that it must be concluded, either that God designed to give the most irrefragable Testimony to the Doctrine grounded thereupon, or else to send a strong Delusion into the World, the Charm of which it would be impossible to break through. But it is utterly inconsistent with the Veracity, Justice, and Goodness of God, so fatally to abuse the Weakness and Credulity of Mankind, to their most unspeakable Detriment: It remains therefore that this glorious Operation of his Power must have been intended as a direct Attestation to the Truth of *Christianity*, and an infallible Proof of that *Life and Immor-* 2 Tim. i.
talities which our Saviour Jesus Christ hath ^{10.}
thus brought to Light through the Gospel.

I

And

SER. IX. And altho' we, who live at this Distance of Time, cannot have the Satisfaction of *ocular Demonstration* for the Resurrection of Christ, or any of the Miracles recorded in Scripture; yet we have the Memory of these Things transmitted to us in those undoubted Records, upon the Credit of those who were Eye-Witnesses to the Facts, and themselves also the Instruments of God's Hand, as well as the Pen-Men of his Spirit; and whose Knowledge of what they report, and their Faithfulness in reporting it, must on all Accounts be allowed to be above any possible Suspicion. Of which they have given the World this very singular and undeniable Test, that they sacrificed all their worldly Interests to the Cause they maintained, and sealed to the Truth of what they delivered with their dearest Blood.

You see then, that the Doctrine of a future State stands upon the most solid Grounds, *viz.* the unexceptionable Testimony of the Apostles of Christ, concerning his Resurrection from the Dead, which was also confirmed by Signs following, and backed with express and repeated Assurances, that *we* also shall be ** raised by the same Power.* And yet, well-grounded

* 1 Cor.

vi. 14.

Rom. vi.

5, 8.

2 Cor. iv.

14.

grounded as this Belief is, the Nature of the SER. IX.
Thing will not admit, that we should have the
immediate Evidence of Sense for it at present :
That we cannot have, till *this Mortal* shall
actually *have put on Immortality*. In the
mean Time, we have that sort of Evidence
which is proper to Faith, and is abundantly
sufficient ; to wit, the Word and Security of
him, *just and true are whose Ways*, and on
whose Will and Power it solely depends. And
this being the Case, it deserves to be con-
sidered,

3dly, That the Evidence which the Gospel
affords us of a future State is built upon as
good a Foundation of Certainty as that of
Sense itself.

As good without peradventure it is ; for
although there be a Difference in the Means
of Information, the Pillar and Ground of
Assurance, when resolved into its true Prin-
ciple, is in effect the same.

For what Security has any Man, that he
shall not be deceived in the plainest Matters
of Sense, when the Organ of Sensation is
rightly disposed, and the Object fairly pre-
sented ? That he shall not mistake hard and
soft, hot and cold, Fire and Water ? Why.
his

SER. IX. his only Security is this, that God, the Contriver and Maker of his Frame, is too wise and good to give him Senses on purpose to misguide him, and lead him into Errors that may prove fatal to his Health and Life.

And the same God is doubtless too wise, and good, and just, to recommend the Belief of any Doctrine to the World, by all the most unsuspected Marks of a Testimony truly divine, when it is all the while no better than a well-disguised *Imposture*.

If it may be presumed, for the Reasons aforementioned, that God will not expose his Creatures to bodily Harms or Hazards, thro' the unavoidable Deception of Sense; much more may it be presumed, that he will not expose them to yet greater Mischiefs, by an Imposition upon their Faith, too subtle to be discovered; much more may it be presumed, that he will not oblige them to hate even their own Lives, and sacrifice them in his Service, with a *Hope full of Immortality*; and after all this, *beguile them of their promised Reward*, and suffer them, as they lived miserably, to die hopelessly.

Now the Evidence of Sense may be more vigorous and affecting; but it is not in Reason
more

more truly convincing, it cannot be in Nature more absolutely certain, than is the Evidence of Faith. I do indeed perceive and feel, that I am now alive, and performing the Functions of Life; but I cannot perceive and feel, that I shall be restored to Life after Death; That's impossible in the Nature of Things. But yet I am as certainly convinced, as I am now alive, that I shall be so restored to Life again; because I am assured of it from the Word of God, whose Goodness and Truth will not permit him to impose upon me, in a Case of such near Importance to me. And that is the ultimate Foundation of all the Certainty I can have, even in Objects that fall most immediately under the Cognizance of Sense.

This Comparison between Faith and Sense, you observe, turns singly upon the Point of Certainty. I do not pretend to say (nor can I be so understood) that we have as clear a Perception, as perfect a Comprehension of a future State by the Evidence of Faith, as we could have by that of Vision: For the Apostle tells us, that *now we see through a Glass* ^{1 Cor. xiii.} *darkly; but then Face to Face.* All that I ^{12.} would aim to say therefore is, that the *Christian*

SER. IX. *stian Believer* is as certainly persuaded afore-hand, and as firmly assured of the Reality of such a State, as if he were already Partaker of it.

Much thus it is with a Traveller that goes to *Jerusalem*, not to explore whether such a Place there be; but to satisfy his Curiosity in seeing the desolated Ruins of a City, which was the ever-memorable Scene of our Saviour's Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension. Which when he comes to see with his own Eyes, no Doubt he will have a truer Idea, a livelier Image, of the present Condition of the Place imprinted upon his Mind, than he could have before, by any the exactest Relation or Description. But he will not be one Jot surer than he was, that there is indeed such a Place; for of that he was sufficiently ascertain'd before-hand; he had not, he could not in earnest have any imaginable Reason to doubt of it. Nay the undoubted Assurance he had, that there is indeed such a Place, was *that* which gave him so strong a Desire of visiting it, and determined him upon the tedious Journey.

And so in like manner will it be with the *Christian Pilgrim* here on Earth, when at length he arrives at the *heavenly Jerusalem*.
He

He will then be admitted to the more immediate Participation and compleat Fruition of those Joys, which here he could only anticipate by Faith, and pant after in Hope. But even when he shall have attained to the Resurrection of the Just, he will not be a whit more certain that there is an Heaven, than he was before; for of that he was no more able to doubt, than of the Being and Attributes of that *High and Holy One* who *inhabits* there. And the substantial Evidence, the unshaken Assurance, the *Christian* hath of this, through Faith and Hope, is the very determining Reason that animates his pious Soul to bend its Course with passionate Desire, and unwearied Endeavours, towards this everlasting Sanctuary of Rest and Peace.

And thus have I attempted to make out, that the Differences in Point of Evidence between a present and visible State, and a future and invisible one, is by no Means such as implies any Reason of Doubt or Uncertainty, concerning the Existence of such an invisible State:

Ist, Because all Things are not capable of the same kind of Evidence, and in particular, a future and invisible State is incapable

SER. IX. of the Evidence of Sense, and yet may be
 ~~~~~ true and certain enough notwithstanding.

2dly, Because, though it wants the Evidence of Sense, it hath that Sort of Evidence which is proper and sufficient in the Kind.

3dly, Because the Evidence which it hath is built upon as good a Foundation of Certainty at least as the Evidence of Sense itself.

If it should be thought, that I have overstrained the Point in equalling the Evidence of Faith to that of Sense, to ease you of that Scruple, I would desire to have it observed, that I don't assert this of every Degree of Faith, but only of such a Faith as is rightly resolved into its true Principle, and firmly rooted in a Mind that is well exercised about heavenly Things, and cleared from the Mists of Prejudice and Vice.

And to a Mind thus prepared to reason, so enlightened, the Evidence of Faith is as firm a Ground of Assent, as that of Sense can be, although it does not make so quick and lively an Impression upon the Imagination. For while the Soul is in this embodied State the Objects of Sense will always lie nearest to Notice, and find the easiest and readiest Admittance, as striking upon the Faculties with

an entire and immediate Force, which when SER. IX.  
Things are fitly disposed, nothing can divert  
or suspend. 

Thus if a Man be but awake, and hath his Eyes open, he can have no room to deliberate or reason with himself, whether he sees the Light of the Sun when it shines: For every Eye that sees at all must needs see it.

But now it is not so with the Objects of Faith: They are not presented thus nakedly and at once in the *intuitive* Way. It requires much serious Attention, and devout Regard, to subject them to Notice, or rather to raise our Capacities to conceive aright of them: It requires a good deal of Ingenuity, Humility, Simplicity, and Purity of Heart, to incline and prepare us cordially to embrace them, and give them full Credence. And herein lies the chief Commendation of Faith, that it is established at length upon sure Grounds, after the Removal of great Impediments; and it cannot take rooting but in a Mind that is freed from Prejudice, and purged from Carnality, and in some Degree abstracted from Sense too, the better to *discern* Things that *are spiritually discerned*; which, it must be owned, are difficult Attainments.

SER. IX. tainments.

And in this Respect the Blessing was justly pronounced by our Saviour upon those *who had not seen, and yet had believed*; because to believe what one sees is so far from being difficult, that it is scarce possible to do otherwise; but to believe with the Encumbrance of Matter about us, and yet both without the Help, and beyond the Reach of Sense, upon Reasons and Motives peculiar to Faith, this argues a Conquest over Difficulties, and a Strength of Mind superior to them. And although this Pitch of Plerophory, this full Assurance of Faith is not easy to be attained, yet when it is once attained, it may well be supposed to work as strong a Conviction as that of Sense itself, but in a different Way of Operation. For Sight will still be one Thing, and Faith another: And so is sensible Proof, and *mathematical Demonstration* too, and yet there may be as much of Certainty in the one as the other, though evidenced in a different Manner.

As for Instance, a Man who is well skill'd in calculating the Force of the *mechanic Powers*, may by a most evident Conclusion, drawn from incontestable Principles, demonstrate, that a Wheel of such a Circumference, with the



*those Things which are not seen.*

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the Application of so much Strength, will be SER. IX.

sufficient to crane up so many Tun-Weight. And when once he comes regularly at his Conclusion, he will be perfectly certain of it, even before he proceeds to make the Experiment; and he can be no more afterwards: And yet the working of the Problem is one Thing, and the working of the Machine another, and will no doubt differently affect the Mind, though it be in Relation to the same Object and Effect.

And in some sort of Resemblance to this, the pious Christian who believes a future State, upon the Credit of divine Revelation, builds his Faith upon the Pillar and Ground of all Truth, even the Veracity of God himself; and what greater Foundation indeed, what other Foundation of Certainty can there be than that? The true Believer therefore is certain aforehand that there is an Heaven; and after he shall be actually translated into those Mansions of Bliss, he can be no more than certain. And yet no doubt he will then find a marvelous happy Difference between firm Belief and Expectation, and immediate Fruition; he will then feel, and with Transport enjoy what he could here only believe,

R 3

but

SER. IX. *but in no wise conceive. However the Want of the experimental Sense of these heavenly Joys, whilst we are at home in the Body, and absent from the Lord, can imply no Want of Certainty concerning this inconceivable Happiness which is laid up in Store for all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and his Appearing.*

And I have said thus much, *ex abundanti*, to help your Conceptions as to the Evidence of Faith and Sense comparatively considered; which was more I confess than was necessary to my present Purpose.

*Secondly*, I proceed now to my second Head, namely, to shew, even though it were not so absolutely certain as it hath appeared to be, that there is such an invisible State, yet that the Vastness of the Disproportion in Point of Duration (if there should prove to be one at last) makes it infinitely more worthy of our Care and Concern, than any Thing in this transitory World can be.

*For* (observe the Weight of the Reason in the Text) *the Things which are seen, are temporal; but the Things which are not seen, are eternal: That is, the Conveniencies and*  
Incon-

Inconveniencies, the Enjoyments or Suffer-<sup>SER. IX.</sup>ings of this present Life, are not only of a finite, but of a short Continuance: Whereas the Happiness or Misery of the Life to come will endure for ever and ever. And

*1<sup>st</sup>*, That the Enjoyments or Sufferings of this present Life are but of short Continuance, is Matter of universal Experience, arising out of the very Nature and Necessity of the Thing.

For the Life of Man *is even a Vapour* <sup>Jam. iv.</sup> *that quickly vanisheth away; it is brought* <sup>14.</sup> suddenly to an End, *as a Tale that is told,* <sup>Pf. xc. 9.</sup> *or as a Dream when one awaketh.* And <sup>Pf. lxxiii.</sup> since the Extent of this mortal Life is con-<sup>20.</sup> fined within such narrow Bounds, 'tis plain, it cannot be so much as the capable Subject of any lasting Enjoyment, or very tedious Suffering. Besides that both the one and the other have their Intermixtures and Intermissions. Pleasure is often attended with Satiety, and draws Vexation after it; and the more it is indulged, the less it is perceived, and the more insipid it grows; and yet, soft as it is, it wastes and wears away the Body, and hastens its Dissolution. And Pain, tho' it makes one think the Minutes flow and

**SER. IX.** heavy, precipitates the Decays of Nature; and when it is very intense, soon dispatches the Patient, and affords him his Deliverance in Death.

However it be, a few uncertain Years will inevitably put a Period to frail Life, and extinguish all its Sensations and Passions. And therefore the most and best we can enjoy, and the utmost and worst we can suffer in our short Passage through this Life, is not, ought not to be of any Moment or Account with us, in Comparison of the much more that we may enjoy or suffer in a future State. For

*2dly, The Things which are not seen, are eternal:* The Happiness or Misery of that invisible State will endure for ever, without Intermission or Termination: A Circumstance that renders both the Happiness and Misery of that State as complete as is possible. And the Description of both in Holy Writ is answerable to this Character. The

*2 Tim. i. 10. Happiness is term'd Life and Immortality, eternal Life, eternal Glory:* It is represented  
*Rom. ii. 7. v. 21. vi. 23. as a continuing City, as an Inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away;*  
*Hebr. xiii. 14. as a perfect Freedom from all Sorrows,*  
*1 Pet. i. 4. and an absolute Conquest over Death, for God*  
*Rev. xxi. 4. shall*



*those Things which are not seen.*

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*shall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes,* SER. IX.  
*and there shall be no more Death.* And the

Misery on the other Hand is expressed by  
*eternal Damnation, everlasting Punishment,* Mark iii.  
*everlasting Destruction:* It is described as an 29.  
*unquenchable Fire,* as a *Worm that dieth not,* Matt. xxv.  
as a *Lake of Fire and Brimstone,* where they 46.  
*shall be tormented Day and Night, for ever* 2 Thess. i.  
*and ever.* 9.  
Matt. iii.  
12. Mark  
ix. 44.  
Revel. xx.  
10.

The Lot then of mortal Man, after he  
shall have run over this short Stage of Mor-  
tality, will be an Eternity of Happiness or  
Misery: An Eternity! An endless, bound-  
less Extent of Duration, that is so far from  
falling under any Calculation, that it surpas-  
ses all Conception.

A Drop to the Ocean, an Atom to the  
Universe do bear a certain *mathematical Pro-  
portion*, which, upon an *Hypothesis* given,  
may easily be calculated. But if we were to  
take all that Revolution of Years and Ages  
which hath been rolling on from the Crea-  
tion to this Day; and if we should add Mil-  
lions of Millions of Ages more to lengthen  
out the scanty Measure of Time, and add  
on and on, as far as *Figures* could express,  
or *Algebra* compute, the whole would be a  
Sum

SER. IX. Sum of insignificant *Cyphers*; it would not so much as enter into the Account of Eternity; the End of the fruitless Attempt would be as far short of the Complement of an endless Duration as the very Beginning. And when all our *Ideas* are exhausted, and our Thoughts swallowed up in Astonishment, the Conclusion of the vain *Theory* must always be, that we have been grasping at that which is incomprehensible.

In fine, Eternity is so utterly incommensurable with any the longest conceivable Period of Time, that strictly speaking (though we use the Word) there is no Proportion, there can be no Comparison between them.

Well therefore may we think and say, that *our Age, that short Span which is allotted to the Life of Man, is even as nothing in Respect of an unfathomable Eternity*; and that all the *Enjoyments or Sufferings of this present Life are even as nothing, in Respect of that Happiness or Misery, which shall run parallel with Eternity itself.*

And since there is the same immense Disproportion between that Happiness or Misery which is only temporal, and that which is eternal, as there is between Time  
and

and Eternity ; 'tis plain, that to provide for SER. IX.  
eternal Happiness, and to secure our selves  
against eternal Misery, is infinitely more  
worthy of our Care and Concern, than any  
Thing in this momentary Life can be. Nay  
it infinitely concerns us to make this wise  
Provision, to lay in this needful Caution, even  
though it be in exchange for all our dearest  
temporal Enjoyments, and at the Expence  
of the most grievous temporal Sufferings :  
For infinite still will the Gain be in the End,  
if, at any Rate, we can purchase for our selves  
eternal Happiness, or, for any Ransom, be  
delivered from eternal Misery.

And this kind of Reasoning would still  
hold, this Way of Acting would still be most  
adviseable, even though it were not so abso-  
lutely certain as it hath been proved, that there  
is such an endless State of Happiness or Mife-  
ry hereafter ; nay, were we to suppose it no  
more than a Contingency, or reduce it even  
to a naked Possibility, common Prudence  
would still oblige us to act with a fitting Re-  
gard to that Contingency or Possibility,  
which, if it should actually come to pass,  
must needs be of the last Importance to us,  
either for Good or Evil.

For

SER. IX.

 For if we reflect once more, what, how  
 endless and boundless Eternity is, and what,  
 and how amazing the Disparity between a  
 State of eternal Happiness and eternal Mi-  
 fery; and if we turn our Thoughts again to  
 consider the Shortness and Swiftneſs of the few  
 Days we have here to live, and how ſoon an  
 End will be put to all the little we can enjoy  
 of ſinful Pleaſures, or may ſuffer by the  
 ſtricteſt Auſterities of Religion; I ſay, theſe  
 Things being ſet one againſt another, even  
 though we had no explicate Revelation of a  
 future State, nor other convincing Evidence  
 for it, the very Remembrance that it is a  
 Thing poſſible, would ſufficiently juſtify the  
 Wiſdom of our Conduct in providing for it,  
 and no leſs expoſe the deſperate Folly and  
 Madneſs of neglecting to make that Proviſi-  
 on. For if there be an Eternity to come,  
 happy, for ever happy they, who have pro-  
 vided for it by a virtuous Courſe of Living;  
 and miſerable without Remedy they, who  
 have neglected it through an Unbelief.  
 Whereas, if there ſhould be no Eternity af-  
 ter all, the miſtaken Believer, as he runs no  
 Riſque, ſo neither can he ſuffer any Loſs, but  
 what will be common to the Unbeliever: For



if this Life be our *All*, then Death will leave SER. IX.

the Believer and the Unbeliever, the Righteous and the Wicked, just in the same Condition. Upon the whole therefore there can

be no such difference sure between the Pleasantry of those Paths which may possibly lead to Heaven, and those which may possibly lead to Hell, as can induce any one deliberately to put himself upon the infinitely unequal Hazard, of forfeiting everlasting Bliss, and incurring everlasting Woe, for the sake of any Thing that can give us either Pleasure or Pain in this present World. \*

You see then what the safest and the prudentest Course would be, upon Supposal, that we were left under the very greatest Uncertainty as to this momentous Point.

But taking the Matter as it really stands, since there is most certain and unquestionable Evidence of a State of eternal Happiness or Misery, although as yet it be remote and invisible to mortal Eyes, and since the Disproportion is unmeasurable between that Happiness or Misery which is only temporal, and that which is eternal, it is undeniably clear,

\* See this whole Argument admirably handled by the judicious Bishop *Blackall* in his Lectures.

SER. IX. that the Assent which we yield to this main Principle of our most holy Faith, is an Act of the highest Reason, and that a Conformity between our Belief and Practice, is the Perfection of true Wisdom.

And that we may all be Proficients in this supernal Wisdom, let me recommend these two practical Rules, as useful Helps to your pious Endeavours.

1<sup>st</sup>, To make the Things invifible and eternal your chief Scope and Aim, as the Word σκοπέω in the Text implies; and to keep the Eye of Faith always intent upon them, always to act with awful Regard to them. For there is something so very moving and shocking in the Idea of eternal Happiness and eternal Misery, that nothing but that Inattention, that Absence or Distraction of Thought, which arises from too much Familiarity with the Vanities of this World, could abate the Force of such powerful Motives, or hinder their good Influence upon Mens Lives and Manners.

It will not be enough therefore to give the Belief of these Things a cold Entertainment in the Understanding, it must be warmly received into the Heart, it must be habitually  
fixed

*those Things which are not seen.*

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fixed and deeply impressed there; it must be confirmed by repeated Acts, and enliven'd by frequent Recollection, it must be called in at all Turns, in Aid of our weak Reason, and wavering Affections, and laid home to the Conscience whenever we are beset with any pressing Temptation.

SER. IX.

And the Faith that is so well established, so vigorously exerted, and so strongly fortified, the Faith that can dart such immediate Light into *Things not seen*, and give so lively a Presence to the Things hoped for; *this is that victorious Faith that overcometh the World*, with all its Allurements, and all its Terrors.

Carnal Pleasure will not intoxicate the Senses, nor defile the Imaginations of that innocent Soul, which hopes and longs to *see God one Day as he is*, and therefore *purifies itself, as he is pure*.

Secular Care will never possess that happy Mind, the *Deceitfulness of Riches* will not bewitch that *Heart* which is already where its choicer *Treasure is*, in Heaven.

Worldly Honour and Grandeur will neither draw away, nor dazzle the Eyes of those who are continually *beholding, as in a Glass, the Glory of the Lord*, and are to be changed into  
the

SER. IX. *the same Image, from Glory to Glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

And the formidable Opposites to these, Pain, Poverty, Disgrace, will not be able to baffle the Patience, or stagger the Integrity of those righteous Souls, whose *Affections* are placed *on the Things above*, and whose Fears are constantly warning them to *flee from the Wrath to come.*

In a Word, the Contemplation of eternal Happiness and Misery, offers that to the true Believer, which so infinitely overbalances all that is most desirable, or most terrible to Flesh and Blood; that could we but keep the awaking *Idea* still present to our Thoughts, it would not barely direct, but powerfully incite us *to press towards the Mark for the Prize of the High-Calling of God in Christ Jesus*; and having once fixed our true Aim on high, all our Designs, Pursuits and Actions would take the same Level, and be made as much as possibly to conduce to the main End, even the End of our Faith, which is the Salvation of our Souls.

Which brings me to the Second Rule of Practice; namely,



2dly, That I would recommend to you to be so provident, as to make these visible and temporal Things subservient to your future and eternal Interest; those worldly Things especially that are most apt to intercept the Prospect of the World to come, and call off our Regards from it.

It is in the Power of God alone to make all Things work together to those that love him, by an over-ruling Providence; but it is in the Power of those who sincerely love him, by his gracious Assistance, to improve the Talents committed to their Trust, to their own unspeakable Advantage, and to convert that Lot or Part which Providence has assigned them in this transitory World, into an everlasting Reversion in the heavenly Places.

Adversity and Prosperity, Want and Plenty, are both Methods of Probation to try the Faithfulness and Constancy of those who are Candidates for Eternity. And these different Lots of Life are attended with their peculiar Difficulties. A necessitous Condition, if the Mind be not well confirmed in Faith, and advanced in Virtue, must lie exposed to many Temptations; and yet Affliction of itself hath rather an Aptitude to loosen Men from

SER. IX.  their Attachment to this World, and call them to a closer Dependence upon God. But I reckon of the two, a State of Affluence and Abundance is, generally speaking, more ensnaring and destructive to Men's Souls. For there is a strange Deceitfulness in Riches, that by a false Glitter makes Men lose Sight of their true Mark, and carries their Views towards other deluding Objects, giving them a high Conceit of themselves, and a vain Confidence in their Wealth, and filling their Minds so full of the Cares and Pleasures of this Life, that not only the Remembrance of Death is industriously banished; but even the Hope of Heaven and Fear of Hell almost quite extinguished.

These are the fatal Snares that are so thick set about the Paths of them, *who are rich in this World.*

But now this is the rare Art that I am recommending to you, how to turn these Incumbrances, these Stumbling-Blocks and Hindrances, into Helps to Piety and Virtue; how to make to yourselves Friends, real Friends of these flattering Seducers and Betrayers of Souls, how to render your temporal Abundance ministerial to your spiritual Wants,

Wants, a covering Veil for Sins, and an En-SER. IX.  
surance of Mercy against the great Day of  
Necessity.

And this excellent Piece of Knowledge *to know how to abound*, we may by God's Help learn from Saint *Paul*, who was himself a Master of it in Experience. And he hath left us his Instructions both how to avoid the Abuse of worldly Wealth, and how to use it piously with Respect to God, beneficially to the World, and profitably for our selves. *Charge them that are rich in this World*, (says he 1 Ep. to *Timothy*, Chap. vi. Ver. 17, 18, 19.) *that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain Riches, but in the Living God, who giveth us richly all Things to enjoy. That they do Good; that they be rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in Store for themselves a good Foundation for the Time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal Life.* Where the Apostle, after a Caution against that Elation of Mind, and that carnal Security which is so apt to breed out of a Surfeit of Plenty, directs those who are *rich*, to place their humble Trust in God, the everliving Fountain of all Good, whose bounteous Gift their Riches are, and

S 2

whose

SER. IX. whose Blessing alone can make them truly  
 ~~~~~ Enjoyments.

And in Token of such their Trust and Affiance, he puts them in Mind to pay a grateful Tribute to the Giver, in the Way of Acknowledgment, that they hold all they have by his free Donation. In Testimony whereof they are strictly required, as they stand obliged, to abound in the Works of Beneficence, and to be communicating of God's good Gifts, and dispensing them, with this Encouragement and Assurance, that what shall be thus dispersed abroad is in Truth laid up in Store, as a safe Deposit with God, to be restored with infinite Increase, or as a sure Title to eternal Life; for which (as the Word *θεμέλιον* imports) God hath given his Bond of Obligation as it were, ratified with the Seal of his sacred Promise, and that often reiterated in the Scriptures.

And large is the Field in which this Seed of Righteousness is to be sown, wide is the Province of Beneficence, as wide as the whole Species of human Nature, with all its Necessities and Infirmities, comprehending all the Opportunities of doing Good, and all the Objects capable of receiving any, or having
 their

their Defects in any Kind supplied, or their SER. IX. Miseries in any Kind relieved. But some

poor Objects there are whose Calamities are the more importunate for the Assistances of Charity, because their Poverty would otherwise be left in the greatest Straits, utterly without Help, and without Comfort. Such as are forsaken Orphans, aged People, grown infirm and past their Labour, the Diseased in Mind or in Body, the Maimed and the Wounded; to whom I must add even the Idle, Disorderly, and Vitious, which last do certainly stand in as much need of being duly corrected and honestly employ'd, as the others do of being assisted, and supported and cherished, according to their several Exigences.

Now that the Bounty of well-disposed Persons might not be scattered in too promiscuous a Way, and so lost many times, as to the good Effects of it in the scattering; that the most miserable and distressed Part of Mankind might not be left at large, to expect Relief in vain, or to seek it where it is not to be had; it has been the Wisdom as well as Piety of many worthy Citizens and others, your Ancestors or Predecessors, to settle pub-

SER. IX. lick Foundations legally incorporated, and
 ~~~~~ liberally endowed for such useful Purposes. And here there is a competent Provision made suitably to the several Occasions and Necessities of the Partakers. There is Education provided for the Fatherless and the Friendless; and Help for the Helpless; there is Food and Medicine furnished, together with the Skill of the *Physician* or *Chirurgion*, and the Care of the Nurse or Keeper, as the Condition of the Patient may require: And lastly, not to omit that again, there is the needful Provision of Work for idle Hands, and Discipline for sturdy Backs.

And that you may perceive how many moving Objects of this Kind there are to solícite your Compassion, and what burning and shining Lights you have before you, to enflame your Zeal and Love; be pleased to lend an Ear to a *true Report of the great Number of poor Children, and other poor People maintained in the several Hospitals in and about this City, and likewise at the Workhouse erected in Bishopsgate-Street.*

*Here the Report was read.*

This

This Report (Right Honourable, Worshipful, and Beloved) naked as it stands, without any Decorations of mine, is a plain, but noble Monument of the Piety and Charity of those who have gone before you; and no less a *Panegyric* upon the pious and charitable Care, the faithful and discreet Management of the present Governours of these Foundations. And I doubt not the plain State of Things, so simply laid open to you, carries the full Force of a Persuasive with it, to the Imitation of those praise-worthy Deeds, the Memory of which is thus preserved, and without magnifying, annually celebrated.

Topical Arguments therefore I shall use none, nor shall I enlarge upon the singular Use of these good Works, which \* I have formerly represented upon a like Occasion: I shall only once again put you in Mind to *have Respect to the Recompence of Reward*: Of which too I reckon you have had a fair Earnest already in Things temporal. For it may † piously be presumed, that the vast Flow of Trade and Wealth for

\* Spittal Sermon, 1706.

† Bishop *Atterbury's* Spittal Sermon, 1708.

SER. IX. *many Years past, into this famous Em-  
porium, hath been owing to God's Blessing  
upon your publick Charities, rather than  
to any other Cause that can readily be assign-  
ed for it.*

But however that may be, I am now exhorting you, *to look not on the Things which are seen, but on the Things which are not seen, or on the former only as convertible into the latter.* For of such a Transmutation, even these temporal Things are capable, by a *Secret* that Charity alone is Mistress of; they are capable of acquiring such a Degree of Firmness and Solidity, such an *enduring Substance* as will last even for ever.

Men are very solicitous now a-days about the precarious Value of their present transferrable Substance (shall I call it) which is so light, that the Blast of every Rumour, every Whisper tosses it up and down, like Straws or Feathers in the Air. But there is a Way of fixing these Uncertainties, and stamping an unalterable Price upon them, Put but some Part of your Stock for God's Sake into the Hands of the Poor, and the rest will be ensured by their Prayers and  
Blessings



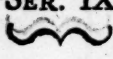
*those Things which are not seen.*

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Blessings upon your Heads. Nay, what SER. IX.  
ever becomes of the rest, that Part shall  
be of infinite more Value to you than the  
whole.

If indeed ye *have not been faithful in  
the unrighteous Mammon, who will commit  
to your Trust the true Riches?* If ye have  
not been faithful in that which is another  
Man's, who shall give you that which is  
your own? (Saith our blessed Saviour,  
Luke xvi. 11, 12.) Which strongly im-  
plies, on the other Hand, that if ye have  
been faithful in these Things, that is in  
the Stewardship of the worldly Wealth,  
with which God hath entrusted you (not  
as any Man's own, but as designed to pass  
from Hand to Hand, especially from the  
Rich to the Poor) then will God of Stew-  
ards make you Owners; he will give you  
permanent Riches in Heaven, and an in-  
defeasible Property in them.

Strictly speaking, there is neither Pro-  
perty nor Perpetuity (often as we misap-  
ply those Words) in any of these earthly  
Things; for God is the Lord of the whole  
Earth, and he giveth and taketh away all  
these Things at Pleasure. The Tenure

**SER. IX.**  poor Mortals have in them is so very weak, that they are never sure of holding them a Moment; so transitory they are, that they are little more than imaginary. But *if ye have made to your selves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness, when ye fail, they shall receive you into everlasting Habitations.* After the World is past away, and the Lusts thereof, then instead of unstable Pleasure in Things belonging to others, which rather seems to be, than really is, then shall ye enter upon (\* τὰ ὅντως ὄντα) Things that have a real Being, and are possessed immortally, and are eternally sweet in the Enjoyment; then shall ye be invested in a *Perpetuity*, in the highest Sense of the Word, a *Perpetuity* that a wise Merchant would sell all he has to buy, even an *eternal Inheritance, a Crown of Glory of eternal Weight, incorruptible, and that fadeth not away.* Towards the Attainment of which, let us beg God's gracious Assistance, in that apposite Collect of the Church: † “ O God, the  
“ Protector of all that trust in thee, without

\* Vide Hammond in *Luke xvi. 12. &c.* Pol: Synopf. in *2 Cor. iv. 18.*

† Collect for the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity.

“ whom

*those Things which are not seen.*

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“whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, SER. IX.  
“increase and multiply upon us thy Mercy,  
“that thou being our Ruler and Guide,  
“we may so pass through Things tempo-  
“ral, that we finally lose not the Things  
“eternal. Grant this, O Heavenly Father,  
“for Jesus Christ’s Sake, our Lord. *Amen.*

*Now to God the Father, &c.*



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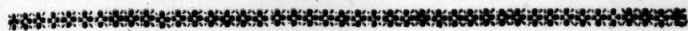
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# S E R M O N X.

The Belief and Practice of *Christianity*  
a Comfort to the *Sincere*.



M A T T. xi. 28.

*Come unto me, all ye that labour, and  
are heavy laden, and I will give  
you Rest.*

**T**H E S E are the Words of the meek SERM. X.  
and compassionate Jesus, inviting  
humble and contrite Sinners to him-  
self; and *that* by the most winning Argument  
that could be thought of, even for the sake of  
their own Ease and Comfort.

*Come unto me*, says the gracious Inviter,  
*i. e.* by Faith; for coming is here to be ex-  
pounded by believing, as it is in the 6<sup>th</sup> of  
St. John

SERM. X. St. *John* Ver. 35. *He that cometh to me shall never Hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.* And in *Heb.* xi. 6. *He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, &c.* And so in several other Places. (*John* vii. 37. vi. 44.)

And the Way of *coming unto Christ*, is by a true, hearty, practical Faith, that is *fruitful in good Works*. It is not enough barely to assent to the Truth of his Doctrine, unless his Precepts be heartily embraced, and conscientiously observed. His Gospel is to be believed, as containing the *Glad-Tidings of Salvation*, and it is to be obeyed, as prescribing the Terms and Conditions of attaining it.

And therefore the Invitation runs, *first come unto me*, as in my Text—And then in the Verse immediately following, *Take my Yoke upon you*—Which Yoke is most certainly that of Obedience to his holy Commandments; for so the Word is used, *Acts* xv. 10. and so this Passage seems to be explained by *St. John*, 1 Ep. v. 3.

And this Invitation is made to those whose Interest (if they are truly sensible of it) must lead them to comply with it; *i. e.* to all such as are under a Sense of Guilt, and the Apprehension

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SERM. X.

hension of ensuing Punishment, and are even weary of the slavish Condition they are in, and groan for a Deliverance: For these, without doubt, are they that labour, and are heavy laden—Thus the Guilt of Sin is represented in Scripture; and Job complains upon this very Account (vii. 20.) *I have sinned, what shall I do unto thee, O thou Preserver of Men? I am a Burden to my self.* This also was David's Experience of it—*Mine Iniquities* (says he, Ps. xxxviii. 4.) *are gone over my Head, as an heavy Burden; they are too heavy for me.* And the Prophet *Isaiah* (i. 4.) calls *Israel a People laden with Iniquity*: And Saint Paul speaks (2 Tim. iii. 6.) of *Women laden with Sin.* And *Baruch* (or whoever is the Author of the Book so entitled) gives the same Description of a guilty Sinner, calling him *the Soul that is greatly vexed, and goeth sloping and feeble* (*Baruch* ii. 18.) as it were sinking under its Load.

So likewise the Punishment of Sin is represented as a weighty Burthen. *The Transgressions of the Earth shall be heavy upon it*, says *Isaiah* (xxiv. 20.) *and it shall fall, and rise no more; i. e. the Judgments there foretold, and denounced by the Prophet, shall be insupportable.*

SERM. X. portable. And again (xxx. 27.) *The Burden of God's Anger* is said to *be heavy*, or very Heaviness.

And that the Servitude of Sin also should be accounted a very grievous and burdensome *Yoke*, cannot appear strange, either to those who have themselves drudged in the Service, or who have observed the sad Effects of it in others that have been enslaved to it.

And to all such who, in any of these Respects, do *labour, and are heavy laden*; *i. e.* under the Load of a guilty Conscience, or the Pressure of God's Wrath, or the cruel Task of obeying their own *sinful Lusts*, the Saviour of Mankind does here promise a suitable Relief—*Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest*; the Rest that now you want, and vainly hope for; *i. e.* I will ease you of all that Burden which your Sins have bound so fast upon you, which is indeed intolerable; and instead thereof, I shall oblige you only to a free and ingenuous Service; a Service that is not only reasonable in it self, but, upon the Comparison, very easy, pleasant, and delightful; and for the undertaking and performing of which, no possible Encouragement is wanting.

And



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And upon the Truth of this in the Experiment, he presses his Invitation in the Words following : — *Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly, and ye shall find Rest unto your Souls. i. e.* Be but willing and obedient Disciples, and put it once upon the Proof, and you will soon feel, that I am no such *rigid Master* as you have hitherto served—*For my Yoke is easy, and my Burden is light ; i. e.* as Saint *John* speaks, without a *Metaphor*, *My Commandments are not grievous.* (1 Ep. v. 3.)

From the Words thus explained, I shall raise this general Point of Doctrine, which, I do imagine, must have occurred to your Thoughts already, namely, that the Belief and Practice of the *Christian Religion* is Matter of great Satisfaction and Comfort to those that are sincere in it.

And this is a Point so much the more proper to be insisted on in this holy Season of *Advent*, because 'tis that which *Christ* himself (when *he came to visit us in great Humility*) made use of, as the main Motive, to persuade Men to embrace the *Christian Profession* ; and therefore I should hope it may still be effectual, to engage *Us*, who are al-

SER. IX. ready of that Profession, firmly to adhere,  
 and strictly to live up to it.

And my present Business therefore shall be,

*First*, To make good the general Doctrine that I have laid down. And

*Secondly*, To vindicate it from some particular Exceptions.

The general Doctrine that I have laid down is, that the Belief and Practice of the *Christian Religion* is Matter of much Satisfaction and Comfort to those who are sincere in it. I say, the Belief and Practice of the *Christian Religion*; for between these two there is an inseparable Connection: The one is the Cause, and the other the Effect; the one the Root, the other the Fruit; the one the Foundation, the other the Superstructure. It is the *Faith* therefore of a *Christian*, as productive of a good Life, which I suppose to afford so much *Satisfaction and Comfort*; and I add, to those that are sincere in it—For those that are insincere in what they profess, do but pretend to be what they really are not: They may call themselves *Believers* and *Christians*, but they are in Truth no better than *Infidels* and  
*profane*

*profane Persons.* And therefore we must not SERM.X.  
appeal to their Experience concerning the  
blessed Advantages of Religion, who are in-  
deed utter Strangers to it.

And thus much being briefly premised, I  
shall now enter upon the Proof of my Asser-  
tion. And first,

*First,* In general I assert, that the Belief  
and Practice of the *Christian Religion* is  
Matter of much Satisfaction and Comfort to  
those who are sincere in it; because it is ac-  
company'd with the fullest and the clearest  
Light, and all the rational Conviction that  
need to be desired; every thing indeed that  
can recommend it to our Judgment or Choice.  
For it is certainly a great Uneasiness and Tor-  
ment to the Mind of Man, to be in Darkness  
and Ignorance, or in Doubt and Perplexity,  
about Matters of the highest Importance;  
and such to be sure are the Concerns of Reli-  
gion. And therefore good Information, and  
sufficient Evidence, and preponderating Mo-  
tives, in such Cases, must of Necessity bring  
a mighty Satisfaction along with it, and give  
*Rest* to the Soul that naturally seeks it.

SERM. X.

And in this Respect nothing is so truly satisfactory, nothing (as I may say) so comfortably convincing as *Christianity*; and that whether we compare it with the dark State of *Infidelity*, or the imperfect Discoveries and insufficient Proofs, and ineffective Arguments, that are to be met with in any other *Scheme of Religion*.

As for *Infidelity*, all its Pretensions are so unreasonable, all its Surmises so uncertain and precarious, and all its Hopes and Wishes, when formed into Argument, so feebly supported, that it can never sit easy upon any Man's Thoughts, when he comes to reflect upon it in good Earnest. For, after all the Doubts and Cavils that have been raised against the Truth of Religion, no Man was ever yet so hardy as to say, that 'tis demonstrable there is no God, that it is impossible there should be a future State, or final Judgment. I say, no Man has ever had the Confidence or the Comfort to give himself this Assurance. And yet unless the *Infidel* could demonstrate the Impossibility of these Things, they may, for ought he knows, prove fatal Truths at last, and then he is ruined to all Eternity. And in the mean Time, the bare Possibility



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(if that were all) that they may prove true, is, SERM. X.  
whenever he will give himself leave to think,  
a bitter Allay to his present Enjoyments, and  
a cruel Enemy to his inward Contentment.

But especially when Age and Infirmities  
creep upon him, or Calamity overtakes him,  
or Death arrests him, then he is left destitute  
of all Comfort, when he most stands in need  
of it; 'tis a sad Prospect that he has then be-  
fore him, when he stands shivering with  
Horror and Amazement upon the Brink of  
Destruction; and that it must be an uncom-  
fortable Life at best, which, during its whole  
Course, is (more or less) subject to these ill-  
boding Fears, and in its Exit is like to be at-  
tended with the most amazing Distraction  
and Confusion.

This therefore I look upon to be one Point  
gained. For if the State of *Irreligion* or  
*Infidelity* be so very unsatisfactory and dis-  
consolate as it really is: This shews the Ne-  
cessity of some Religion at least, because else  
a Man can have no true Satisfaction, living or  
dying.

But then the Question is, where shall we  
find *this Rest unto our Souls*? What Religi-  
on is that, that will yield us solid and judi-  
cious Satisfaction?

Will the Light of Nature or Reason lead us to it? Alas! human Nature is too much depraved, and human Reason is too much impaired, to guide us in this Search with any Certainty.

Look but into the Religion of the ancient *Heathens*, and see how gross their Errors were, how irrational and ridiculous their Worship, both in Respect of the Object to which it was directed, and the Manner in which it was performed.

They were so sottish as to adore Men and Mortals like themselves, and Brutes, a Rank below them; nay, senseless Stocks and Stones, and meer *Non-Entities*, and empty Names, without a Being. Nay, they deify'd the very Diseases of their own Bodies and Minds, and gave themselves up to the most infamous Vices in the lewd Solemnities of a *Bacchus* and a *Venus*, and a *Flora* and *Cybele*. And (which is still more horrid and detestable) they sacrificed even their own Offspring to the Devil, and Destroyer of Mankind.

These were the Objects, and these the Rites of that Religion. And I need not say how far such a Religion must be from affording any rational Satisfaction, that appears

first View to be both absurd and unnatural. SERM. X.

And if we look into their *Philosophy*, as expecting something there that shall be more agreeable to Reason, and more worthy of the Nature both of God and Man, we shall still find our selves miserably disappointed. For their Notions of God were low and little: Their Opinions concerning the *Summum Bonum*, or Man's chief Happiness, were various and unsettled: Their Precepts and Rules of moral Virtue were narrow and defective: Their Principles of Duty were lame, and their Motives to Practice weak and ineffectual, and their Guesses at a future State were so doubtful and uncertain, that they could have little or no Influence upon the Conduct of their Lives.

And if their *Morality* had been better grounded, and farther carried than it was, yet natural Reason, even in its best State, could have given them no sufficient Assurance of God's Pardon, or Acceptance of the Terms of their Reconciliation, or the Measures of their Obedience, of the Nature and Value of that Reward which is God's free Gift to those that seek, and the Weight and Terror

SERM. X. of that Punishment which will be executed upon all *the Workers of Iniquity*.

*Natural Religion*, I say, could not possibly account for these Things, which do entirely depend upon God's Sovereign Good-Pleasure, and therefore can be learned only from *Revelation*.

Our next Recourse therefore is to the *Religion* of the *Jews*, which was confessedly of divine Institution. But yet nevertheless, if we examine it near at Hand, we shall still want that Satisfaction we are in quest of.

For the *Jewish Dispensation* carries such manifest Marks of Imperfection along with it, as do bespeak the Necessity of some new *Revelation* to supply its Defects.

Its Rites and Precepts seem to be peculiarly suited to the Condition, the Capacity, the Temper and Genius of that particular People, for whom they were first framed; but not to be calculated for general Use.

It consisted chiefly of external Performances, of *Washings* and *Cleanings*, *Sacrifices* and *Oblations*, which could not purify nor pacify the Conscience, nor indeed satisfy the Reason of a Man.

The



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The Obligation to Obedience was univer-<sup>SERM.X.</sup>  
sal and indispenfable, and the Provision by  
way of Atonement was partial, and not  
thoroughly effectual. For some Sins no Sa-  
crifice would be admitted, and tho' Sacrifice,  
where it was appointed, might atone for the  
legal Impurity, yet the inward Guilt and De-  
filement still remained, and God's Justice was  
unappeased.

In one Word, they, the *Jews* I mean, la-  
boured under the Rigour of a very burthen-  
some Law, and the Discouragement of their  
own natural Inability to perform it, without  
any explicate Promise of the divine Assistance  
or Mercy upon their Repentance, and with-  
out any vigorous Hopes of a future Recom-  
pence to animate their Endeavours. For the  
Rewards and Punishments to them proposed,  
were, though not I think purely temporal,  
yet fuch as a grofs and carnal People were too  
apt to mistake for fuch, and to look no fur-  
ther.

Upon the whole, the Law (as the *Apostle*  
speaks, *Heb. x. 1.*) *could not* in any wife *make*  
*the Comers thereunto perfect*, neither perfect-  
ly innocent, nor perfectly fecure; and confe-  
quently it could afford them but flender Satis-  
faction.

We

SERM. X.

We are yet therefore to seek for that *Rest* which none but *Christ* can give; no Religion but *his* assure unto us. But (blessed be God and his Goodness) here we find it, and may take our Fill of it: For 'tis every Way adequate to all our Wants and Desires, and approves it self in all Points to our rational Choice.

If we weigh the Evidence with which *Christianity* is propounded to us, it is as full and as convictive as is needful or possible.

Such as is the Completion of many *ancient Prophecies*, the Verification of dark *Types* and *Figures*, and a most exact and remarkable Correspondence with the whole System and Design of the *Jewish Institution*, in which there is a perpetual Reference to a *Messiah* to come, at whom almost all their Rites and Ceremonies, and Predictions do manifestly point: And all these are observed to center in our *Saviour Christ*, and him only, particularly (to name no other at present) the surprizing Circumstances that relate to the Manner of his Conception, the Time and Place of his Nativity, his Office and Endowments, the Occurrences of his Life and Death, and all the strange Changes that followed in the World thereupon. Add

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Add to these the extraordinary Attestation SERM. X.  
given by God himself to the Truth of his  
Mission, by audible Voices, and visible Ap-  
pearances, and mighty Miracles, undisputed  
and inimitable Miracles, such as Nature's  
Power could never reach, and the Sleight of  
Art could never counterfeit; by the Effusion  
of his Spirit upon his Disciples, and the won-  
derful Methods of Providence in propagating  
and establishing the *Christian Faith* against  
all the united Force of Prejudice, Interest,  
Policy and Power.

Was there ever better Evidence? Could  
there ever be a more glorious Testimony to  
the Truth and Divinity of any Religion?  
And consequently can there be any surer  
Grounds than those which the *Christian*  
builds his Faith upon? Can there be a more  
judicious Satisfaction than that which ac-  
companies our firm Assent to such important  
Truths so undeniably attested?

And then, if we consider the intrinsic  
Worth and Excellency of this Religion, what  
noble Discoveries does it make concerning  
God's Nature, and Attributes, and Councils  
relating to Mankind; and particularly con-  
cerning his *inestimable Love, in the Redemption*

*SERM. X. of Mankind, through the Merits and Mediation of Christ?*

What admirable Rules of Piety and Virtue does it give us, comprehending all the possible Instances of Duty towards God, our Neighbour, and our selves? and carrying them up to the sublimest Pitch of which our finite Nature is capable, by proposing to our Imitation the Perfection and Holiness of God, and the exemplary Pattern of the *Man Christ Jesus*?

How free and ingenuous is that Obedience which is required of us, which is entirely resolved into Love, sincere and unfeigned Love towards God and Man, upon which two *hang all the Law and the Prophets*?

How mighty is the Encouragement to all virtuous Endeavour, that arises from the consideration of the Remission of our Sins past, upon Condition of Repentance, and the Acceptance of a sincere, though imperfect Obedience, and the powerful Aids of divine Grace, and the ravishing Hopes of everlasting Glory? of that Life and Immortality which our *Saviour Jesus Christ has brought to Light, through the Gospel*?

And



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And certainly then it must be a marvelous <sup>SERM.X.</sup>  
Satisfaction and Comfort, that flows from  
the sincere Belief and Practice of the *Christi-  
an Religion*, which is grounded upon such  
clear and incontestable Evidence, whose Dis-  
coveries are so great and noble, and of such  
infinite Concern to Mankind; whose Rule  
and Pattern of holy living is so exact and per-  
fect; whose Service is so free and easy; and  
lastly, that affords such engaging Motives to  
set about our Duty, and such powerful  
Assistance to perform it.

And let this suffice for the general Proof of  
my Assertion, in such Manner as the Limits  
of a short Discourse would admit. But I  
shall crave Leave to resume some of the In-  
stances last hinted, and view them more  
distinctly, that so we may the better perceive  
what it is in particular, that enhances the sin-  
cere *Christian's* Comfort and Satisfaction:

And I instance

1<sup>st</sup>, In the Remission of Sins upon Repen-  
tance. And this is that of which we can  
have no Manner of Assurance, either from  
the *Light of Nature*, or any other *Revelation*,  
but the *Christian*. The natural *Idea* we  
have of God does indeed represent him as  
a Being

**SERM. X.** a Being of infinite Goodness and Mercy; but then it concerns him to be equal in Justice and Holiness, and all other Perfections.

And though we might be apt to conclude in favour of the penitent Sinner, from the Contemplation of the divine Goodness, yet if we consider how hateful Sin is in his Sight, and how injurious to his most holy Majesty, we can by no Means presume upon his Forgiveness, without a Compensation to his Honour and Justice. And this is a Difficulty that Reason can never get over, nor yet the Law of *Moses* answer.

For according to the Tenour of that Law, Sacrifices were not appointed, nor allowed to atone for the greatest Offences. And consequently, though there were any real Virtue in the Blood of Bulls to wash away the Stain of Sin, and cleanse the inward Man, yet since they are the lesser Sins only that can be legally expiated, the main Burden of the Guilt must still remain, and both aggrieve and affright the Conscience of the Offender, without Help or Remedy.

But to this End, and *thus it beloved Christ to suffer*, and propitiate his Father's just Anger, by the precious Sacrifice of himself, that

*Repentance*

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*Repentance and Remission of Sins should be* SERM. X.  
*preached in his Name throughout all Nations.*

And by him (to borrow St. Paul's Words, *Acts xiii. 39.*) *All that believe, are justify'd from all Things, from which ye could not be justify'd by the Law of Moses.*

And is not this a most invaluable Privilege? Is it not indeed the very Foundation of all our comfortable Hopes and reasonable Assurance, in appealing as it does our troubled Consciences, and removing our anxious Fears, and giving us *Access to the Throne of Grace, through our alone Mediator and Redeemer Christ Jesus.*

2dly, Another Gospel Privilege that contributes still more to our Peace and Satisfaction is, the Acceptance of our sincere and willing, though not perfect and unfinning Obedience. For this was the very Sting of the Law, that it required a most inviolable Observance of all and singular its Precepts, or else the Curse was unavoidable; for it is written (*Deut. xxvii. 26. Galat. iii. 10.*) *Cursed is he that continueth not in all the Things which are written in the Book of the Law, to do them; without any manner of Abatement for the Frailty and Weakness of human Nature.*

But

SERM. X.

But our gracious Lord, though he has given us the Law much more perfect and refined, than was that of *Moses*, and though he expects it should be most impartially obey'd, yet it is with all imaginable Tenderness to our pitiable Infirmities. And tho' he cannot actually dispense with the Breach of any Part of his Law, yet he makes not every Slip of ours an Article of Condemnation against us; but kindly accepts of the best of our Affections, and the best of our Endeavours; and *if any Man sin* (through Ignorance, or Surprise, or the over-bearing Power of some violent Temptation) *we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the Propitiation for our Sins.* (1 John ii. 1.) And not only for such Sins, but even for those Sins that are willful and deliberate, if they be but seriously repented of, and truly forsaken.

And is not this a great Consolation in the Discharge of our Duty? Is it not a mighty Spur to excite our Diligence, and invigorate our Activity in God's Services, when we are comfortably assured, that if we love him with all our Hearts, and serve him with our utmost Power, the Sincerity of our Affection

shall



shall be accepted, notwithstanding any in-<sup>SERM.X.</sup>  
voluntary Default in our Obedience, and our  
natural Infirmities shall be helped as well as  
pitied. For,

3dly, Another *Gospel Treasure* which adds mightily to the Stock of our *Christian Comforts* is the Aid of divine Grace. Had we no Promise of this, we might be tempted to sit down in Despair, and conclude, that even the Measure of Obedience which God is willing to accept at our Hands, is not feasible, nor practicable, especially considering our Weakness and Corruption, the Variety, Strength and Insinuation of the daily Temptations that we meet with, and the unwearied Diligence, Malice and Subtlety of our great Enemy and Seducer.

But since God has promised *his holy Spirit to them that ask him*, we must no longer complain of the Difficulty of our Duty, nor the Weakness of the Flesh, nor the Prevalence of Temptation, nor the Snares of the Devil; for if we look up towards Heaven, and implore the divine Assistance, all these Discouragements will presently vanish: For God's Grace is sufficient for us, *and his Strength is made perfect in Weakness.* (2 Cor. xii. 9.)

**SERM. X.** And upon the whole, though we have no Reason to *glory in our own Infirmities*, yet in the *Grace of God* we may justly rejoice, and upon its Sufficiency we may safely rely, if we make Room for its Reception in a sincere humble Heart.

4thly and Lastly, That which makes our Consolations abound still more and more, and fulfills all our Joy, is the *blessed Hope of Immortality*, and an *everlasting Crown of Glory*: This, as 'tis one of those noble Discoveries which are owing more peculiarly to the *Gospel Revelation*, so 'tis incomparably beyond all other the Motives and Enforcements of Religion. It is this that enlarges our Thoughts beyond the narrow Bounds of Sense and Time, and exalts our Affections above the World and worldly Things. For what signify the Smiles or Frowns of Fortune, the temporary Enjoyments or Sufferings of this present Life, to the Man who has his Eyes fixed upon *celestial Joys*, and whose Ambition is still aspiring towards Heaven, who forgetting those things that are behind (and indeed infinitely below him) *presses toward the Mark for the Prize of the High-Calling of God in Christ Jesus*. And this is the full

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Complement of that abundant Comfort and <sup>SERM. X.</sup> Satisfaction, which the sincere Belief and Practice of the *Christian Religion* does afford. I proceed now,

*Secondly*, In the second Place, briefly to vindicate the Doctrine that has been hitherto asserted, from some Exceptions, to which it may seem to be liable.

1<sup>st</sup>, And the first Exception is this, that 'tis hardly consistent with Truth, to make such mighty Boasts of the Comfort and Satisfaction that attends a sincere *Christian's* Belief and Practice, when 'tis notorious, that the Laws of *Christianity* are some of them more rigorous and *strait-laced*, than were those of *Moses*; and others again so very grievous to Flesh and Blood, that they are e'en insupportable. This Exception consists of two several Parts, which I shall therefore answer severally.

1<sup>st</sup>, They say, that some of the Laws of *Christ* are more strict and rigorous than were those of *Moses*. For Instance, *Moses* said, *thou shalt not kill*. (Exod. xx. 13, &c.) But *Christ* will not allow us so much as to be angry without a Cause. (Matt. v. 22.) *Moses* only,

**SERM. X.** only, *thou shalt not commit Adultery*: (Exod. xx. 14.) But *Christ, whosever looketh on a Woman to lust after her has already committed Adultery with her in his Heart.* (Matt. v. 28.)

To this I reply, that it is a very unreasonable Thing, to make the Wisdom and Perfection of the *Christian* Religion an Objection against it, and to censure that as a Piece of Hardship, which is indeed a great Ease and Advance to the *sincere Christian*.

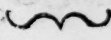
For certainly there can be nothing more effectual to make the Observance of the Law easy, and to keep Men from grosser Offences, than to lay a Restraint upon all the Inclinations and Motions tending towards Sin, and put a Bar against all the Approaches thereunto.

Nay, I will be bold to say, that the Laws against Murder and Adultery would be almost impossible to be kept, if the fierce Passion of Anger were perfectly let loose, and wanton Looks and Desires were tolerated and indulged. But

2dly, It is farther suggested, that *Christ's Yoke is so far from being easy, and his Burden light*, that some Duties peculiar to *Christianity* are extremely grievous to Flesh and Blood,



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if not intolerable; such as are the *Forgiveness* SERM.X.  
*of Injuries, Self-denial, taking up the Cross,*   
and the like. But to this it may be reply'd,

That the Difficulty in these Cases is nothing near so great as is commonly imagined. If Men will indulge themselves in contrary Habits indeed, they create a Difficulty to themselves, that they ought not to charge upon Religion. For to them that are naturally malicious and revengeful, and allow themselves in it, Forgiveness is, and must be a Duty hard to be digested: To them that are *Lovers of Pleasures, more than Lovers of God*, and have weakened and softened even their natural Constitutions, by an effeminate Course of Life, Self-denial must needs be very painful and irksome: And to them who have set their Hearts upon Wealth and Honours, it must needs appear a heavy Imposition, to require them to *forsake all, and take up the Cross, and follow Christ*. But to put the Case equally, we must allow as much Good-Will, and hearty Endeavour, and customary Practice on the Side of Religion, as against it. And upon this Equality I doubt not but all the imaginary Difficulties with which Men are apt to fright themselves will soon  
U 3 vanish.

vanish. Nay, I doubt not but all these Difficulties, once conquered by firm Resolution, and contrary Habit, would contribute much to our Ease and Freedom, and yield us unspeakable Delight and Complacency. Thus, for Instance, for a Man to be such an absolute Master of his Passion, as not to entertain the least Desire of Revenge in any Case whatsoever, is certainly the easiest Posture of Mind that can be, and sets one above the Spight of all his Enemies. Thus again, to keep our Desires within the Bounds of Moderation is certainly the sweetest and serenest of all Pleasures, and a Remedy against all the Vexation that is too frequently occasion'd by the Emptiness of all worldly Enjoyments. Thus lastly, a confirmed Habit of Patience puts a Man's Happiness in his own Power, and secures him in the Fruition of it, against all Changes and Chances, because he is in continual Preparation to submit to God's good Providence. But

Take it at the worst, impartially speaking, the Practice of the severest Duties of *Christianity* is attended with far less Hardship and Inconvenience, than are some of the opposite Vices. Take an Example of this,  
among

among others, from the *covetous Man*. What SERM. X. prodigious Pains does he take, what Difficulties does he run thro', what Severities does he practise upon himself, only to be imaginarily rich, but really poor? For he has not the Heart, he has not the Power to enjoy any Part of his Abundance; nay perhaps he cannot so much as say to himself, *for whom it is that he labours, and bereaves his Soul of Good.* (Ecclef. iv. 8.) And yet his Eye is not satisfied with Riches: But every Addition that he makes to his Estate is like a fresh Draught in a *Dropsy*, that distends his Body still more, but at the same Time increases his Thirst. Nor is his Heart any thing at rest, even when all Things flow according to his greediest Wishes; for he is still incessantly tormented with anxious Cares, and spends a wearisome and wretched Life, amidst the Toil of getting, the Desire of encreasing, and the Fear of losing what he doats upon; and over and above all this *fore Travel*, perhaps he does perpetual Penance in denying himself those Gratifications, which his Ambition or *Luxury*, or some other Lust or Appetite do impetuously crave.

SERM.X.

And now I appeal, would it not be much less difficult, for a Man once for all, to *cast his Care upon God*, and to resign wholly to him, than to be perpetually languishing and consuming with pining, carping Anxiety? Would not *Godliness with Contentment* (as hard a Lesson as that is thought) *be great Gain*, in Comparison of the dear Purchase that such a one makes of an useless Estate? Nay, might he not venture to *take up the Christian's Cross*, and bear it with less Pain? For Oppression would hardly be so cruel to this Man (not Persecution itself more so) than he voluntarily is to himself.

This is a remarkable Instance of the Hardship and Drudgery which Men are forced to undergo in the Service of Sin. And the same might easily be shewn in some Proportion to be the Case of every one that is under the Power of any predominant Lust; and the Servitude of the habitual Sinner is so much the harder to be borne, because 'tis odds but he is engaged in the Service of *divers Lusts* at once, all of which are unreasonable in their Impositions, and cruel in their Exactions, and some of them at the same Time, 'tis like, quarrellsome and irreconcilable



*Christianity a Comfort to the Sincere.* 297

concilable one with another. So that the <sup>SERM.X.</sup> poor *Vassal*, as he is constantly employed, so he is often distracted in the Service; and whilst he does his best Diligence, to be as wicked as he can, he cannot be at all Points so wicked as he would—and yet the *Fury* that is not punctually obey'd never ceases to torment him, notwithstanding his willing Mind.

And this is one observable Difference betwixt one that is habitually good and him that is habitually wicked.

Let us all then lend a willing and obedient Ear to the condescending Invitation of the Text, and let me invite you over again in the Name of our great Master.

O come hither unto the Teacher, who certainly came from God, all ye *Sceptick* and perpetual Seekers, who are lost in the midst of many Uncertainties and Perplexities, come and surrender your Reason to the sure Guidance of Faith, and ye shall find all reasonable Satisfaction: Submit but your Wills to his Will, and your Understandings shall be enlightened of Course; ye shall know and see that this Doctrine is of God, and in all Respects worthy of him the Revealer.

And

SERM.X.

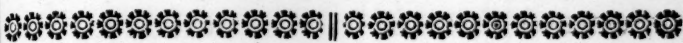
And come hither, ye *Believers*, come unto your Lord, with a *Tender* of entire Obedience, and you shall find to your unspeakable Comfort, that he is no *austere Master*, that he expects not to *gather where he hath not strawed*; ye shall find, that he hath given you all Things pertaining to Life and Godliness, and requires but a *suitable Improvement*; ye shall find, that all he demands is but your reasonable Service, and that your very Duty is your Happiness.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, Three Persons, but One God, be ascribed, as is due, all Praise, Glory, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, now, henceforth and for evermore. *Amen.*



# S E R M O N XI.

Of that Faith, which overcometh the  
World.



1 Ep. JOHN v. 4. latter Part of the Verse.

*—And this is the Victory that over-  
cometh the World, even our Faith.*

**W**HEN our *blessed Lord* was about SER. XI.  
to send his *Apostles*, naked and  
unfurnished as they were of any  
secular Aid, into a wide World of Wicked-  
ness, with a Commission *to teach and convert*  
*all Nations*, that they might not be discourag'd  
at the Difficulty of the Task, or the low'ring  
Prospect they had before them, he thought it  
proper to fortify their Minds with such com-  
fortable

portable Assurances and Promises, as might be most apt to cure them of their desponding Fears, and animate them with the Hopes of glorious Success in all their Labours.

And whereas in particular, it might very justly be apprehended, that the World would receive the *Servants* just as it had the *Master*, that is, with all the violent Opposition that Malice, armed with Power, and managed with Policy, could make; *He*, far from dissembling this threatening Danger, expressly forewarned them of it; but in such a Manner, as plainly bespoke his own generous Contempt of it, and was design'd to beget a Confidence in them, that they also (through him) *should be enabled to conquer it.* (John xvi. 33.) *These Things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have Peace: In the World ye shall have Tribulation; but be of good Cheer, I have overcome the World.* And in Matt. xxiv. 14. after he had reckon'd up abundance of formidable Difficulties, that should encounter the Gospel upon its first Publication, he adds, (with a notwithstanding) *and this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the World, for a Witness unto all Nations*—As if the Obstruction it was sure to meet with were to be a Furtherance to it.

And



And in the Event indeed so it proved. For <sup>SER. XI.</sup> in a short Space of Time *Christianity* prevailed to a Marvel, not only against a strong Combination of inveterate Prejudices, habitual Vices, and darling Interests, but against the united Cunning, Force and Fury of Men and Devils. A plain Demonstration that it was supported and established by a Power truly divine, that was not only superior to all Opposition, but able so remarkably to make its Advantage of it.

An Argument that I have lately insisted upon at large \*.

But of all the marvelous Successes of the *Gospel*, none deserves our Consideration more than *that* it had upon the Hearts and Lives of true Believers, enabling them, as it did, perfectly to subdue their own *fleshly Lusts*, to command all their Appetites and Inclinations, to raise their Thoughts and Affections above this present World, or any thing in it that might allure them, or affright them--- Which gave Occasion to that Saying of the Text, so well exemplified in the whole Conduct of the *primitive Christians*—*This is the Victory*—or this is it *that overcometh the World, even our Faith*.

\* Sermon. 7, 8. Vol. II.

SER. XI.

And that we may profit by the Example of those that have experienced the Efficacy of this divine Principle in their Hearts, and manifested it so visibly in their Lives, give me leave to consider,

*First*, What that *Faith* (to which Saint *John* ascribes this *signal Victory*) is, and what is implied in it.

*Secondly*, What is to be understood by the *World*, and wherein the *Victory* over it must consist.

*Thirdly*, How *Faith* is qualify'd to be so successful an Instrument in *overcoming the World*. And

*Fourthly* and Lastly, How victorious it has actually been, and what admirable Effects it has wrought in ancient Times; which may serve at once to reprove the scandalous Practice, and to revive, if it may be, the languishing Zeal of this degenerate Age.

*First*, I shall consider, what that *Faith* (to which Saint *John* ascribes this *signal Victory*) is, and what may be imply'd in it.

And this *Faith* (if we take our Account of it from the Context, as 'tis most natural to

to do) appears to be no other than a cordial SER. XI. and sincere Assent to the Truth of the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*, and all the Precepts, Promises, and Threats therein contained.

For *who is he* (as the next Verse has it in a Question that answers it self) *Who is he that overcometh the World, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*

And to believe that *Jesus is the Son of God*, is to believe, in Consideration of the Dignity and Divinity of his Person, the many Prophecies in him fulfilled, and Miracles by him performed, that he is the Christ, the Anointed One, ordained of God to be the Saviour of the World; it is to believe, in Vertue of these Credentials, that the Doctrine which he taught is most infallibly true, and the authentick Revelation of God's own Mind and Will. It is to believe that *there is no other Name under Heaven given among Men, whereby they may be saved*: That the Remission of our Sins, and Salvation of our Souls, is only to be obtained through his Merits and Mediation, and upon no other Terms than what he has proposed; and that, besides the steadfast Belief of all this, Repentance and Newness of Life, and a Conformity to his Pattern

in

SER. XI. in Holiness and Righteousness, are Conditions on our Part necessarily required : It is to believe, that, upon our Performance or Neglect of these requisite Conditions our final State must depend ; that in the mean Time God has appointed him to be the Judge of *Quick and Dead, and that the Hour is coming, when all those that are in their Graves shall bear his Voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done Good unto the Resurrection of Life, and they that have done Evil unto the Resurrection of Damnation.* (John v. 28, 29.) And that his last Sentence, whether of Absolution or Condemnation, shall unalterably determine Men to be for ever happy, or for ever miserable. All this is virtually imply'd in that *Faith*, to which Saint *John* gives the Honour of *overcoming the World*-----And it amounts to no less than a full Conviction, and a firm Persuasion, that the Gospel is perfectly true, and equally good and gracious, in propounding the equitable Terms, and prescribing the properest Means of our Salvation ; and that there is on our Part a strong Obligation to Obedience, nay indeed an absolute Necessity of Compliance, as we value our everlasting Happiness or Misery.

And



And this is a Principle, that, if once duly SER. XI.  
apply'd to Practice, should, one would be  
apt to think, work very powerfully, and  
might in all probability be able even to *over-*  
*come the World.* But before we proceed to  
enquire farther into its Energy and Virtue, it  
will be fit to be considered

*Secondly,* What is here to be understood  
by the *World*, that so we may the better judge  
wherein the *Victory* over it must consist.

And by the *World*, I conceive we are to  
understand, all those worldly Objects that  
are most apt to affect us, thro' the *Medium*  
of carnal Sense, or weak Passion; such as  
are Pleasures, Wealth, Honour, on the one  
Hand; on the other, Pain, Poverty, Dis-  
grace: Opposites these to each other, but  
equally Enemies to Religion, and dangerous  
Temptations: The former as unreasonably  
gratifying the sensitive Part, and feeding our  
*evil Concupiscence* with continual Fuel; the  
latter, as thwarting natural Propension, and  
bearing hard upon human Frailty and Infir-  
mity; the former, as serving the Interest of  
Vice, and making it look pleasing and agree-  
able; and the latter, as creating a Dislike to

SER. XI. Virtue, and representing it in an ugly frightful Shape.

And whilst we sojourn in this Earth, and are clothed with this Body of Flesh, it is impossible to be wholly out of the reach of these Temptations. The Malice and Craft of *Satan* will at all Turns strike in with our depraved Nature, and endeavour to work upon our Love or our Hatred, our Desire or Aversion, our Hope or our Fear, in relation to these Things, that so, if possible, he may alienate us from God, and seduce or deter us from our Duty. Happy they to whom it is given to *overcome the Wicked One*, and all his Accomplices, in the Day of Trial!

But this is a *Victory* not to be purchased at an easy Rate; it will require much Pains and Watchfulness, and Resolution, and Courage, and Patience and Perseverance. He that is able to confine all his Appetites and Desires within the Bounds of Temperance, Chastity, Moderation, Contentedness and Humility; he that is above doing any base, unjust, or dishonourable Action, tho' he were to gain the whole World, and be crowned with universal Applause; he that can gene-  
rously

rouisly undergo the most undeserved Re-<sup>SER. XI.</sup>  
 proach, that can patiently endure the great-  
 est Loss, or severest Hardships; rather than  
*make Shipwrack of Faith and a good Con-*  
*science*: In a word, he that can gallantly des-  
 pise all the Allurements and the Terrors of  
 this transitory World, when once they come  
 in Competition with his Duty to God, and  
 his greater Concerns above, he is the Man  
 that is the true *Hero* of the Text, and *over-*  
*cometh the World*; and the *Victory* is happi-  
 ly begun by getting the mastery over himself,  
 and all that is within him; and 'tis made  
 compleat by a Contempt of the World, and  
 all that is without him. But alas! *who is*  
*sufficient for these Things*? How can Flesh  
 and Blood arrive at this noble, but difficult  
 Pitch of Virtue? If we consult our selves,  
 how can feeble Nature, whose whole Force  
 is far short of *ten thousand*, be able to meet  
 Temptation that is above *twenty thousand*  
*strong*, and full of Art and Stratagem? But  
 let us not despond, for if we make a true  
 Computation, *those that are with us, are more,*  
*and mightier, than those that are against us*;  
 for 'tis our *Faith* at last, not a natural, but a  
 supernatural and heavenly Principle, that en-

SER. XI. enables us to overcome the World: But it will  
 be a further Satisfaction to us to consider

*Thirdly*, How *Faith* is qualified to be so successful an Instrument in overcoming the World, and all its Temptations.

And it is eminently qualified for this Purpose, upon these two Accounts ;

1<sup>st</sup>, Because *Faith* presents the true Believer with Motives much more forcible to induce him to *cleave to that which is Good*, and to *abhor that which is Evil*, than any worldly Consideration can be to move him to the contrary. And

2<sup>dly</sup>, Because it gives him an undoubted Assurance of such Aids and Succours as will be sufficient to over-power all the greatest Difficulties he can meet with in the Discharge of his Duty.

1<sup>st</sup>, The first Reason is, because Faith presents the *true Believer* with Motives much more forcible to induce him to *cleave to that which is Good*, and to *abhor that which is Evil*, than any worldly Consideration can be to move him to the contrary.

For he that seriously believes the Gospel, and is thoroughly sensible of the Obligation  
 and



and Necessity that lies upon him to obey it, SER. XI.  
 does also believe, and is always aware of the  
 certain Consequences of his Obedience or  
 Disobedience. He is well assured, that this  
 mortal Life is a State of Probation and Tri-  
 al; but that which is to come, a State of just  
 Retribution, that is decisive and permanent.

He is most firmly persuaded, that if *by pa-  
 tient Continuance in well-doing, he seek for  
 Glory and Honour, and Immortality, he shall  
 inherit eternal Life, a Life of Glory and  
 Happiness without Mixture, without Inter-  
 ruption, without End: But, if he be of  
 them who draw back unto Perdition, that  
 then he shall have his Portion with the Hypo-  
 crites, and be cast into outer Darknefs, where  
 the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not  
 quenched, and where he shall be tormented Day  
 and Night for ever and ever.*

And these Things, tho' future and invisi-  
 ble, Faith gives as real an Existence to, as if  
 they were already present, and imprints such  
 an immediate Conviction upon the Mind,  
 as leaves no possible room for Doubting, no  
 more than a Man can doubt of the true Re-  
 port of his own Senses, in the plainest Object  
 of Sense; or indeed of the unchangeable

*SER. XI.* Truth of God himself, which is the Foundation of all Certainty in Matters of Sense, and therefore (by more than Parity of Reason) in Matters of Faith also.

And the Man that is under this Conviction, must at the same time be equally convinc'd, that the Happiness or Misery which must be his Inheritance in the next World, are infinitely disproportionate in respect of Weight and Duration, to all the Good or Evil that can befall him in this.

And the Sense and Apprehension of this, and the lively Impression it makes upon his Thoughts, causes him to be extremely careful and solicitous, whatever becomes of the present, to secure his main Stake, that he may be happy at last, and not wretched to all Eternity.

And this is the well-fix'd Principle that influences, directs, and over-rules all his Actions, that inspires him with Vigour and Resolution in the Performance of his known Duty, and makes him perfectly superior to the World, with all its Smiles and Flatteries, and all its Frowns and Menaces.

If Pleasure at any Time attempts his Virtue with her enticing Looks, he turns away  
his

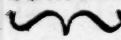
*overcometh the World.*

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his Eye as it were in Disdain, and says, *my* <sup>SER. XI</sup>  
*Soul, consent thou not, thou wert not made*  
for a Life of Sense; and alas! what are these  
mean Gratifications, these false and fading  
Enjoyments to the *Joys of Heaven, and those*  
*Rivers of Pleasure, which are at God's right*  
*Hand for evermore?*

If Riches encrease, he sets not his Heart  
upon them, nor puts his Trust in them;  
but instead of lulling himself with the Fool's  
*Requiem*, he says prudently, take Heed,  
O my Soul, these are but Snares, at best  
they will fail thee in the Day of need; be it  
thy Care therefore to be *rich in good Works,*  
*and to lay up a good Foundation against the*  
*time to come,* otherwise thy future Loss will  
infinitely outweigh thy present Gain.

If he be in Reputation and Honour, he  
exalts not himself above the Station of a Crea-  
ture, but owns that the Gift and Distinction  
is from God; and therefore he borrows the  
Virgin's humble Strain, and says, *My Soul*  
*doth magnify the Lord: For he that is migh-*  
*ty hath magnified even me; (Luke i. 46.)* and  
therefore to him, as the Fountain of Ho-  
nour, let it return, but let my Soul always  
esteem it more honourable to be one of the

SER. XI.  meanest of his Servants, than to stand before Princes.

Thus again on the other hand, if he be in Contempt or Disgrace, conscious still of his Innocence, and resolved to maintain it, he will say, it is my Honour however to bear my Part in that which was our Saviour's Lot, and all his faithful Followers; and 'tis much better sure, and easier to be borne, than that Shame and Confusion of Face, that shall cover Sinners at the Day of Judgment.

If he be reduced to Poverty, he was *poor in Spirit* before, and that will make any Condition tolerable to him, but he will still lay fast hold of the *Anchor of his Hope*, and rest in full Assurance that God, who knows also what is best for him here, hath mercifully provided some better Thing for him hereafter, a more *enduring Substance in the Heavens*.

Lastly, if he be visited with bodily Diseases or Pains, or persecuted with Torments even to Death, he will again contemplate his suffering Saviour, and all the *noble Army of Martyrs*, he will call to Mind, *that when this corruptible shall have put on Incorruption, and this mortal, Immortality; then even*  
*Death*



*overcometh the World.*

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*Death it self shall be swallowed up in Victory,* SER. XI.  
*then there shall be no more Sorrow, nor Cry-*  
*ing, nor Pain, but perfect Rest and Peace,*  
*and endless boundless Happiness for ever-*  
*more.*

And herein therefore plainly consists a great Part of that Efficacy which *Faith* has to overcome the World, viz. that it presents the true *Believer* with Motives much more forcible to keep him firm to his Duty, than any temporal Consideration, that Prosperity or Adversity, all the Changes, or Chances of this mortal Life can be to shake his Constancy. And besides,

2<sup>dly</sup>, To render him still more confident of the *Victory*, it gives him an undoubted Assurance of such Aids and Succours, as will be sufficient to over-power all Difficulties.

For we are not left, God be thanked, to our own Strength, which is feeble as Water, and hardly of itself sufficient for any Thing; but our Sufficiency is of God.

And if Christ dwell in our Hearts by Faith, God will be ready to grant (as we may gather from the Tenor of St. Paul's Petition for the *Ephesians*, (*Ephes. iii. 16.*) He will be ready to grant us, according to the Riches

**SER. XI.** *Riches of his Glory, to be strengthened with Might by his Spirit in the inner Man.* And our frail Nature when re-inforced by this spiritual Strength, is able to perform an acceptable Obedience, without being weary of Well-doing, or impatient of Suffering.

Such Temptations as are common to Men we need not be discouraged at, having the Pledge of his Word (1 Cor. x. 13.) that *God is faithful, and will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the Temptation also make a Way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.* Nay, if God should see fit to prove us by some severer Trial, yet still we may with Safety depend upon his Faithfulness and Goodness. *For his Grace is sufficient for us, and his Strength is made perfect in Weakness.* If the Visitation be extraordinary, so will his divine Assistance too, as we may comfortably learn from St. Paul's Experience; and any Man that is in Distress need not doubt of experimenting the same in himself, if he earnestly seek and sue for it. *For if any Man lack Wisdom, or Constancy, or Courage, or any other good Gift that is needful to arm him against Temptation, let him ask in Faith, and ask of God, who giveth*

*to all Men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. (James i. 5.)* SER. XI.

And we have not only the Benignity of the divine Nature to encourage us in our Applications, but the powerful Name of it, to recommend and sanctify all our Petitions, and his constant Intercession to make them effectual; the Intercession of him, who suffered, and was tempted himself, but triumphed in both, and is therefore undoubtedly able, and as a true *Sympathizer*, no less willing to *succour those that are tempted*. And 'tis the Assurance that Faith gives of this heavenly Succour, added to the weighty Motives which it presents, that makes it so successful an Instrument in helping us to overcome the World and all its Temptations.

And by the Way, from what has been said upon this Head it appears, that Faith is a much better Instructor than ~~meer~~ Reason, and the Gospel a more effectual Reformer than the most *refined Philosophy*. For the Rules of *Philosophy* had no Authority besides the reputed Learning and Wisdom of their several Authors, and were enforced by no Motives hardly but those of Decency, Convenience, and good Fame. The great Gos-  
pel

SER. XI.

pel Sanction of everlasting Rewards and Punishments was little urged, because indeed it was but doubtfully entertained, and not upon any sure Foundation.

And as for the Assistance of divine Grace, they perceived, they owned no Necessity of it, in order to be virtuous; for Virtue, as it is argued (*Tull. de naturâ Deorum*, L. III. *sub finem*) is the proper Commendation and Glory of a Man, which it would not be, were it a Gift of God: And therefore that there was no need of Application or Acknowledgment to the Gods for making Men just, or temperate, or the like. Nay, the *Stoicks*, in their insolent Way, make their *wise Man* equal, or rather superior to the *Gods*, because of the Difficulties that he met with and mastered in the Practice of Virtue. And yet these vain Men, with all their boasted Freedom from Passion, were as very Slaves to their Lusts and Vices, as any others. It is the Gospel alone that furnishes Motives and Supplies sufficient to animate and support frail Man in the Conquest of himself and the World.

Fourthly and lastly, It now only remains to be considered, what glorious *Victories*  
Faith



Faith has gained, and what admirable Effects SER. XI.  
of this Sort it has wrought in old Times. ~~~~~

A Consideration that may serve at once to reprove the scandalous Practice of this degenerate Age; and revive, if it may be, the languishing Zeal.

And if we were to carry this Enquiry as far back as the ancient *Patriarchs*, and others before them (whose Faith was in Substance the same with ours, in Circumstance only different) we should find even by what is recounted in the 11<sup>th</sup> to the *Hebrews*, that the Energy of their Faith was marvelously great, surmounting all manner of Difficulties, even to seeming Impossibilities, prevailing over the Power of Custom and Education, silencing the strong Pleas of natural Affection, and triumphing in the very Infirmities of the tenderest Age and Sex, and all upon the distant, unseen Hope of a *better Resurrection*.

But not to give my self so large a Scope, I shall content my self at present with a short View of the Lives and Manners of the *Primitive Christians* and the wonderful Change that was wrought in them upon their embracing the Faith of Christ. And of what Efficacy

SER. XI. cacy this Belief was, to transform them into new Men, the Scripture affords us an early *Specimen* (in the 1 Cor. vi. 11.) where, after the black Catalogue of the most dangerous and detestable Sins, it is added, *and such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

And St. Paul makes the same Acknowledgment for himself and others (*Tit. iii. 3.*) And this is that which demonstrates the Gospel to be what Saint Paul very significantly calls it, *the Power of God unto Salvation* (*Rom. i. 16.*); that it should be able not only to bring Men over to a new Opinion, or a new Form of Worship, but also to reclaim them from their Vices, and divorce them from their beloved Lusts, and that it should work this strange Alteration in the most profligate Persons, and the hardest to be reformed.

An Alteration too great to be effected by the Force of dry *Philosophy*, or meer Reasoning and Persuasion: Such Instances, if any, are but very rare to be met with.—But as *Origen* well argues (p. 152.) that the simple, unartificial

unartificial Speech of the Apostles of Christ SER. XL  
 should as it were by powerful Charm convert  
 Multitudes from Debauchery to Sobriety,  
 from Injustice to Honesty, from unmanly  
 Cowardice to such a Pitch of Courage as  
 made them contemn Death it self in the  
 Cause of their Religion---This is a Power  
 truly to be wondered at, and manifestly di-  
 vine; that could mould Men, by Nature  
 and by Custom most confirmed and obsti-  
 nate Sinners, into a new Frame of Spirit,  
 and a quite different Way of Conversation.

This is an Argument that the ancient *Apo-  
 logists* dwell upon with Pleasure, as being that  
 which evidently shews the wonderful Energy  
 of Faith, and the just Preeminence of the  
 Gospel above all other Institutions.

And therefore ye find them frequently mak-  
 ing their *publick Challenges*, and fairly appeal-  
 ing to publick Experience for the Proof of it.

\* *Lactantius*, in particular, in a pretty  
 bold Scheme of Speech to this Purpose:

"Give me the Man that is ungovernable in  
 "his Passion and in his Tongue, and with a  
 "few Words of God, I will render him as

\* *Lactant.* de Falsa Sapientiâ, Lib. III. c. 26. Da mihi  
 virum qui sit iracundus, maledicus, effrænatus, paucissimis Ver-  
 bis tam placidum quam ovem reddam, &c.

"a Lamb:

SER. XI.

“ a Lamb: Give me the Man that is covetous and tenacious, you shall have him again free and bountiful: Give me the Man that is timorous at the Apprehension of Pain or Death, and immediately he shall condemn all the cruellest Tortures that can be inflicted: Give me the Man that is a *Whoremonger*, or a *Debauchee*, and you shall see him presently chaste and sober: Give me the Man that is cruel and blood-thirsty, and his Fury shall soon be turned into Pity: Give me the Man that is egregiously unjust, foolish, or vitious, and he shall quickly prove the clear contrary.”

From whence, allowing for the *rhetorical* Manner of Expression, we may safely infer thus much, that there did indeed appear a prodigious Change in Men's Lives and Manners upon their Conversion; otherwise the *Advocate* had unnecessarily exposed himself and his Cause by making so foolish a Boast.

And the plain Truth of the Matter is, the *primitive Christians* were so eminent and exemplary in their Piety, their Humility, their Modesty, their Temperance, their Chastity, their Heavenly-mindedness and Contempt of the World, their Constancy and Patience,



their Justice and Charity, their Peaceableness SER. XI. and Unity : I say, they were so eminent in all these Virtues, that the very *Heathens* could not but observe it, and stand amazed at it, as being Strangers to that divine Principle upon which they acted. Nay, one of their bitterest Enemies, *Julian the Apostate*, bears them this Testimony, by recommending their Practice as worthy of Imitation.

And these are the glorious Things that are recorded of the Gospel and its admirable Efficacy, when first it appeared in the World. Things which, if they were not upon Record, would hardly appear credible, if we were to judge only by the present State of *Christianity*, and the small Conformity, or rather the shameful Inconsistency, that there is between our Profession and our Practice.

For as it was our Saviour's Prediction of those early Days, that *because Iniquity shall abound, the Love of many should wax cold* (Mat. xxiv. 12.) So it is our sad Experience in these latter Times, that the Faith of most is waxen weak. And this is both the Cause and the Effect of that *Iniquity* which *abounds* among us.

For on the one Hand, some there are that rather than pass for *superficial Men* (forsooth)

SER. XI.  take Pains to unsettle the very Foundations, and, by this Means, not being any longer under the Influence of Faith, nor the Restraints of divine Grace, they become equally vain in their Imaginations, and wicked in their Conversations. Others again there be, who being accustomed to a licentious, lewd Course of Life, endeavour by Degrees to frame their Principles according to their Manners, that so nothing may interfere with their inordinate Love of that Pleasure, which was the Corrupter of both.

And even among those who do not make so plain a Defection from the *Christian Faith*, the Efficacy of it is still obstructed by unnecessary Separations from the Church, and Divisions in it, and fierce Animosity and Envy, and all Manner of Uncharitableness, which prey upon the very Vitals of our most holy Religion, and leave us nothing but the empty Name of it.

And if we consider Mankind in the generality, the World seems to engross so much of their Thoughts and Affections, and to take up so much of their Time and Care, that Futurity falls under little or no Account, and *the Things that are not seen* are scarce at all regarded.

garded. Men are so far from putting them-<sup>SER. XI.</sup> selves under the Conduct of *Faith*, and engaging in a holy War against the World, that *Faith* is become with them a very useless, or at least a very unactive Principle, a meer notional Thing indeed, that some will dispute and contend for, but few are willing to be governed by. No; it is foolish Fancy, it is fashionable Opinion, it is prevailing Custom, it is secular Policy; these, and such as these, are the common but uncertain Guides of human Life, in Opposition to God's most wise and holy Laws; nay in Opposition to Men's most lasting and important Interest. Men may pretend or profess what they please, but 'tis too plain, they live and act as if there were no other World but this; as if this changeable and transitory Scene of Vanity were to be their final and everlasting Habitation. Monstrous strange! that *Believers* and *Christians* should live like *Infidels* and *Atheists*! Let us rather endeavour to remove this Scandal and Reproach to our common Faith; Let us remember that we are *Christians*, and comport ourselves agreeably to that high Character and Profession: Which that we may all of us do, God of his infinite Mercy grant, &c.





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 S E R M O N XII.  
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The Nature and Qualifications of  
*Christian Hope* considered.

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ROMANS XV. 13.

*Now the God of Hope fill you with  
 all Joy and Peace in believing,  
 that ye may abound in Hope, thro'  
 the Power of the Holy Ghost.*

THESE Words are plainly a Form SER. XII.  
 of *Benediction*, with which Saint  
 Paul closes his foregoing Exhortati-  
 on to the *Romans*; recommending them to  
 God's especial Favour; and praying, that he  
 who is both the *Object* and the *Author* of the  
*Christian's Hope*, would replenish their Souls

SER. XII. with an entire Complacency and Satisfaction in the Belief of the divine Promises; and (as a Consequent of that) with a more abundant Increase of *Hope*, to be wrought in them by the efficacious Operation of the Holy Spirit, the immediate Inspirer of *this*, and every other *Grace*.

This is all that I think needful now at first to premise, to let us into the right understanding of the Words; which yet will clear up to us more and more as we go along. And I shall proceed, as the Text prompts me, to discourse,

*First*, Concerning the Nature and Qualifications of *Christian Hope*.

*Secondly*, Concerning the happy Fruit or Effect of it, which is, in the Language of the Text, *all Joy and Peace in believing*; and (as a Consequent of that) a more abundant Increase of *Hope*.

And *Thirdly*, Concerning the necessary Means of attaining this *Grace*, and growing and improving in it.

*Fourthly* and lastly, after I have dispatch'd these Heads of Discourse, I shall draw some Inferences from the whole, which may be  
useful

*of Christian Hope consider'd.*

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useful for the Direction and Consolation of *Christians.* SER. XII.

*First* then, I am to speak concerning the Nature and Qualifications of *Christian Hope*. And, as I humbly conceive, it may be truly thus defined.

It is a divine Grace inspiring the Soul with a well-assured Expectation of the Performance of God's Promises through Christ, more especially those that concern our everlasting Happiness.

Which Definition of *Christian Hope* it will be convenient to examine more particularly, that we may have a clear and distinct Notion of it. And

1<sup>st</sup>, I say, it is a divine Grace, as being terminated in God as its principal Object, and derived from him as its proper Author.

It is terminated in God as its principal Object, because *Hope* implies an earnest Desire of Good; and God is not only the Source of all communicated Good, but absolute essential Goodness it self; the Fulness of whose Perfection alone is able to answer our highest Expectations, and satisfy our most enlarged Desires to the uttermost. He is the

SER. XII. only Being, in short, in relying upon whom we may be entirely safe, and in the Enjoyment of whom we can be compleatly happy: *There be many that say, who will shew us any Good* (according to the *Psalmist* iv. 6.) But the only Stay of our Souls in all our solicitous Enquiries after Happiness is the divine Favour: *Lord, lift thou up the Light of thy Countenance upon us.* (*Pf.* iv. 6.) Hence is it that God is stiled in Scripture the *Hope of Israel* (*Jer.* xiv. 8.) and *the Hope of his People* (*Joel* iii. 16.) And we read (*Acts* xxiv. 15.) of a *Hope towards God*, directed, that is, to him as its supreme Object: And Expressions of the like Importance are very frequent both in the Old and New Testament.

And as our *Christian Hope* terminates in God as its principal Object, so it is derived from him as its proper Author. For *this Hope* is not the Effect of a lively Spirit, or a good Constitution; it is not a meer natural Passion, nor a moral Virtue; but it is a supernatural infused Habit, descending from above, as well as aspiring thither; it is, as Faith is, to which it is so nearly ally'd, *the Gift of God* (*Eph.* ii. 8.) And for this Reason also God is termed the *God of Hope*  
in



in the Text, as being the gracious Donor of SER. XII.  
it: And again in more express Terms (2 *Thef.*  
ii. 16.) he is said to have given us *good Hope*  
*through Grace.*

2dly, And therefore secondly, I have put  
it into the Definition of *Hope*, that it is a di-  
vine Grace inspiring the Soul, and intimating  
by whose immediate Efficiency it is produc-  
ed, and that is, as the Text itself has it, *thro'*  
*the Power of the Holy Ghost*, the ever-blessed  
Spirit of God, to whom the Act of Inspira-  
tion is properly to be ascribed; the very same  
that is emphatically called the *Spirit of Pro-*  
*mise* (Ephes. i. 13, 14.) *wherewith we are*  
*sealed, and which is the Earnest of our Inbe-*  
*ritance.*

And the Impression that is made upon the  
Mind of the true *Believer* by the *Seal* of the  
*Spirit of Promise* gives him such a lively  
*Idea* of the Happiness promised to him and  
purchased for him, that he cannot but ardent-  
ly desire, and with an earnest kind of Con-  
fidence expect, what he therefore stedfastly  
believes, because *it is God that hath promised*,  
which is indeed the formal Nature or Essence  
of *Hope*.

3dly, For

3<sup>ally</sup>, For thirdly, as the Definition proceeds upon just Reason; it is a divine Grace inspiring the Soul with a *well-assured Expectation of the Performance of God's Promises thro' Christ*. Which at once points us to the more immediate Object of our *Hope*, and the true Ground and Foundation of it.

God himself, as I have already said, and the Fruition of him as our sovereign Good, is the principal Object of our *Hope*: But the more immediate Object are his most gracious Promises recorded in Holy Writ; from hence we must fetch the certain Information and the comfortable Assurance of that Happiness which we are emboldened to expect. For since all the Good that we are capable of receiving and enjoying, either in this Life or the next, depends solely upon his Good-pleasure, and results purely from his Free-Grace, we cannot reasonably or safely build our Hope, but upon the plain Intimations of his Pleasure, in the Overtures of his Grace made to us in Scripture. And though we might truly infer from the Perfection of the Divine Nature, from the Benefit of our daily Preservation, and all the ordinary Blessings of Providence, *that God is good, and doeth Good*; yet

since

since we are sufficiently conscious to ourselves, SRE. XII.  
that we are not *worthy of the least of his Mercies*, but most justly deserving of his severest Wrath, we cannot ground any *religious Hope* (that kind of *Hope* which we are now speaking of) upon any thing less than God's own *faithful Promise*.

And whatsoever God hath been pleased to promise, that (and that only) may we with humble Confidence hope for: And 'tis our Duty so to do; but always with a regardful Eye to the Promise, and the Terms upon which the Promise is made, that so our *Hope* may not grow larger than the Foundation upon which it stands.

If the Promise be absolute, then there is nothing to set Bounds to our *Hope*: But if the Promise be conditional, then our *Hope* must have respect to the Condition (whatsoever it be) and must be regulated and limited by it: As for Instance, the Condition of our Pardon and Salvation is true Repentance; and without Repentance 'tis in vain to hope for it. So necessary is it that there should be a due Proportion, as well as a strict Relation between our *Christian Hope* and the divine Promises upon which it is founded. Hence  
is

**SER. XII.** is it that we read so frequently in Scripture of the *Children of the Promise* (Rom. ix. 8.) of the *Heirs of Promise* (Gal. iii. 29.) of the *Word of Promise* (Rom. ix. 9.) of the *Covenant of Promise* (Ephes. ii. 12.) and in *Acts* xxvi. 6. expressly of the *Hope of the Promise*: Whereby is meant that fundamental Promise of the *Resurrection of the Dead*, which is the grand Support of our *Christian Hope*.

And that which makes the whole Foundation of our *Hope sure and stable*, is, the *Merits and Mediation of Christ*. For all the *Promises of God in him are Yea, and in him Amen* (2 Cor. i. 20.) He by his Union and Interest with the Father, procured, as I may so say, the first *Fiat* for them: He ratified them in his own Blood: He is continually applying them to the Conscience of the *true Believer*, by the Efficacy of his Spirit, and he that is both first and last will see them finally accomplished.

*We*, as the true *Children of Disobedience and Wrath*, had forfeited our Inheritance, and incurr'd a just Damnation; and in this wretched Plight we were hopeless and helpless of our selves; and all our Expectation from God was a certain fearful looking for of



*Judgment, and fiery Indignation.* But Christ SER. XII.  
 paid down the full Price of our Redemption,  
 even his own dear Life: And he makes way  
 for the Acceptance of our true Repentance  
 by his prevailing Intercession; and, upon our  
 Obedience and Perseverance, will finally rein-  
 vest us in the purchased Possession by his *Re-  
 gal Power*. Through him *we are begotten  
 again to a lively Hope, after we were dead in  
 Trespasses and Sins*: Through him were all  
 those exceeding great and precious Promises,  
 in which the *Christian* is interested, original-  
 ly convey'd: Through him they were so-  
 lemnly ratify'd: And through him they will  
 receive their perfect Completion. And there-  
 fore he is in a very apt Figure called by Saint  
*Paul* (1 Tim. i. 1.) *The Lord Jesus Christ  
 our Hope*, as being so eminently the Founder  
 and Restorer of it.

4<sup>thly</sup>, But fourthly, as our *Christian Hope*  
 is grounded upon the divine Promises in  
 general, so, to make it still more determi-  
 nate, it is supposed in the Definition, to have  
 a more especial Respect to those Promises  
 that concern our everlasting Welfare and Hap-  
 piness.

We

SER. XII.

We are not indeed absolutely forbidden to *hope* even for temporal good Things, nay we have Promises in Scripture to countenance such *Hopes*; though there is but sparing Mention of any such in the Gospel, which is established upon a better Bottom; and where we do meet with them, they are still postponed and made subordinate to our greater Good and our higher End. *Seek ye first* (says he that ought to be our Director, *Matt. vi. 33.*) *the Kingdom of God, and the Righteousness thereof, and all these Things shall be added unto you*; as an *Overplus*, that is, of which no Account is to be made, 'till the *one Thing needful* be first provided for. For *this is the Promise that he hath promised us, even eternal Life* (1 John ii. 25.) This is it that our *Mediator* has purchased for us at so dear a rate; and this is it (if we know how to value our own Happiness) that ought to be most valuable and desirable to us. Secular Comforts and Conveniencies we may *hope for* by the by, with profoundest Submission to God's wise and sovereign Disposal, and as they may be best subservient to our more concerning Interests above; but our *Hopes* ought to be ultimately fix'd, and with the greatest Degree

Degree of Ardour and Affection upon those SER. XII.  
spiritual and eternal Things, which are either  
instrumental to our future Happiness, or per-  
fective of it; such as are the Remission of  
our Sins, and our Justification in the Sight  
of God, or Proficiency and Growth in Grace,  
and our Consummation in Glory; when all  
our Hopes shall center at once in God him-  
self, and be swallowed up in the blissful Fru-  
ition of his Presence for ever. But

5thly, There is another Qualification of  
that *Hope* that is to conduct us safely to our  
ultimate End, that remains yet to be confi-  
dered, *viz.* that it creates in the Soul a  
*well-assured* Expectation of the Performance  
of the divine Promises, &c. A well-assured  
Expectation, I say; for all *Hope* implies some  
sort of Assurance or Certainty. But then  
what the true Ground and Measure of this  
Certainty is, is a Thing that ought to be heed-  
fully attended to, lest the Apprehension of  
the want of it, or of any requisite Degree  
of it, should sink Men into a State of List-  
lessness and Despondency, or at least disturb  
them with needless Doubts and Scruples;  
or lest a rash Conceit of the Abundance  
of it, should puff them up with Pride,  
4 and

SER. XII. and betray them into Sloth and carnal Security.

Now upon this Occasion it is to be remembered again, that the general Grounds of our *Hope* are the Promises of God : And 'tis most infallibly certain, that whatever God hath absolutely promised, he will as absolutely perform. Because he is infinite in Power, and Truth, and Goodness. And therefore as there is no Impediment that can obstruct the Execution of his Will, so there is no kind of Inducement that can divert him from his gracious Purpose.

But now here lies the Difference, all God's Promises are not of the same Nature and Extent. Some are absolute, and some are conditional.

Those that are absolute and not limited with any Condition, must, and shall undoubtedly come to pass. And the *Hope* conceived upon these kind of Promises is accompany'd with an absolute Certainty, as absolute and indefeasible a Certainty as any Event can have, that depends upon the Concurrence of God's Power, Veracity and Goodness. Such, for Instance, is the Hope of *that Life and Immortality which Christ hath brought*



brought to Light through his Gospel. For the Promise is unlimited, the Scripture expressly asserts a general *Resurrection of the Dead, both of the just and the unjust*; and therefore nothing can shake our Assent in this Case; nothing can frustrate this our Expectation; for, to borrow Saint Paul's Words to Timothy (2 Tim. i. 12.) *We know whom we have believed, and we are persuaded that he is able to keep that which we have committed to him (i. e. both our Bodies and Souls) against that Day.*

SER. XII.

But those of God's Promises which are only conditional, are suspended, as to their Accomplishment, upon the Conditions annexed; if we be careful for our Part to observe the Conditions requir'd, he will be punctual in fulfilling his own Promises; but if we be wilfully negligent of our Duty, his Veracity and Goodness stand no farther engaged to us. And the *Hope* that is established upon these conditional Promises, can arrive to no other than a conditional Certainty.

And of this Kind are those Scripture Promises that give us the Hopes of Pardon and Salvation, upon the explicit Conditions of a true *Repentance*, a new Obedience, and a

constant Perseverance. So says the sacred Text expressly. *Repent, and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out. (Acts iii. 19.)* And so again *(Matt. xix. 17.) If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments.* And again *Matt. xxiv. 13.) He that shall endure unto the End, the same shall be saved.* The Result of which Passages is plainly this, that the Penitent, upon Supposition that he is truly and perseveringly such, may entertain a sure and certain *Hope* that his Sins shall be forgiven him, and his Soul everlastingly saved.

But this can never amount to an absolute Certainty; because though he may be allowed to be a competent Judge of his present Sincerity, yet he can never be perfectly secure of his future Perseverance, whether he considers the Mutability of his own Will, or the Frailty of his Flesh, or the Multiplicity of the Temptations he must encounter, in his *Christian Warfare*; or lastly, the Necessity of the divine Grace to carry him thoro', which depends upon God's good Pleasure, who is a better *Discerner* than himself even of the *Thoughts and Intentions of the Heart* (*Heb. iv. 12.*) and a more impartial Judge than

than his own Conscience. So much Reason SER. XII.

was there for that humble Confession and Petition of the *Psalmist's* (xix. 12.) *Who can understand his Errors? O cleanse thou me from secret Faults.* And so much Need is there to use that Caution of the Apostle's, *Let him that standeth, take heed lest he fall.* (1 Cor. x. 12.) For, as Saint *Austin* truly and pertinently observes upon this Argument, the Righteous, though they be certain of the Reward of their Perseverance, *i. e.* supposing that they do actually persevere, yet they are found to be but insecure of their Perseverance itself; *i. e.* whether they shall be able to maintain it or no; for the frequent Lapses, and the unavoidable Infirmities of the best Men, are too sensible Warnings of the contrary Danger.

But even this conditional Certainty of the sincere *Christian's* Hope will admit of farther Degrees of Confirmation, according to the Progress and Proficiency that he makes in Virtue, and the Proof he makes of his own Stedfastness. For *Hope*, like other Habits, the more it is exercised the more it is improved, and the greater Strength it gathers. And when a Man has undergone many repeated

**SER. XII.** Trials, and severe Conflicts, and remains still fixed upon the *Anchor of his Hope*, not to be moved by any Violence from that Good which he so resolutely cleaves to; this is the surest Token of an upright Heart, the safest Ground he can have to expect an additional Measure of Grace; 'tis the best Pledge that could be given him that *his Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*. In a Word, it is the highest Pitch of Security that can be arrived at on this side Heaven, where alone *indefectible* Holiness and Happiness dwell, inseparable Companions for ever. And thither it is that this *Hope* climbeth, by the sure Steps of that Gradation of our *Apostle's* (Rom. v. 3, 4, 5.) *For we know that Tribulation worketh Patience; Patience Experience; Experience Hope; and Hope so well confirmed as this, maketh not ashamed*. It can hardly, after all this Fulness of Assurance, prove fallacious in the End.

Nay, I will not adventure to deny, but that those happy Persons who are endued with this elevated degree of *Hope*, may have their *Plerophory* made up by the internal Testimony of the Holy Spirit of God bearing *Witness with their Spirit that they are the Children*



*of Christian Hope consider'd.*

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*dren and Heirs of God, and Coheirs with* SER. XII.  
*Christ.* (Rom. viii. 16.) I am so far from  
denying this, that I make no Doubt but it  
may have happened to some Persons, upon  
some extraordinary Exigence or Occasions,  
either to support and relieve them perhaps  
under the Pressure of some very sore Tempta-  
tion, or to fortify them against the approach-  
ing Terrors of Death, and the more terrible  
Judgment that is to follow, by an *anticipat-*  
*ed View of the Glory that shall be revealed in*  
*them.*

But this is more than is ordinarily attain-  
able, or upon any special Promise to be ex-  
pected in particular, and therefore it was not  
to be reckon'd as a common and necessary  
Ingredient in our *Christian Hope*, into whose  
Nature and Qualifications I have been hither-  
to enquiring. And I think I have shewn  
it to be, as I at first defined it, a divine  
Grace inspiring the Soul with a well-assured  
(though not absolutely certain) Expectation  
of God's Promises through Christ, especially  
those that concern our everlasting Welfare  
and Happiness.

And I have been the larger and the more  
particular in explaining the Nature of this

*Christian Grace*, because I judg'd a right Notion of it might help pretty much to rectify some *untoward Mistakes*, and to *disentangle* Men's Souls from some very dangerous Snares and troublesome Perplexities.

*Secondly*, I proceed to the second Head of Discourse, which is concerning the happy Fruit or Effect of this Grace, which is by the Blessing of God two-fold, *viz.* in the Language of the Text, *all Joy and Peace in believing*, and then as a Consequent upon that, a still more abundant Increase of *Hope*.

*Now the God of Hope fill you with all Joy and Peace in believing, that ye may abound in Hope, &c.*

*1st*, The first good Effect that, by the Blessing of God, flows from this divine Grace, is what the Text expresses by *all Joy and Peace in believing*. And this may signify either, 1. An entire Satisfaction of Mind, and a perfect Acquiescence in embracing whatsoever God has propos'd as the Object of our Belief: Or else, 2. That inward Complacency and Peace of Conscience that is the Concomitant of a well-grounded and well-exercis'd *Faith* or *Hope*. In one, or both

both of these two Senses the Words may not SER. XII. inconveniently be understood, as I shall briefly illustrate.

I. And first, This *Joy and Peace in believing* may signify an entire Satisfaction of Mind, and perfect Acquiescence in embracing whatsoever God has propos'd, as the Object of our Belief. For there is a close Affinity betwixt *Faith* and *Hope*; and they are mutually helpful to each other. *Faith* stands first in Order, and lays the Foundation-Stone of *Hope*, and *Hope* builds gradually upon it, and raises a firm, as well as earnest Expectation. *Faith* teaches us to rely upon God, as being most immutably true; and *Hope* excites us to pant after him, as most sovereignly, and most desirably good.

And the ardent Desire that *Hope* inflames us with, at once invigorates our *Faith*, and fixes and strengthens our *Affiance*. *He that cometh unto God, must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of those that diligently seek him.* The bare Belief of God's Existence would affect a Man but coldly, in Comparison, but if we believe withal that he is our greatest *Friend* and *Benefactor*, this animates our *Hope*, and our *Hope* adds Strength again

to our *Faith*, and makes it at once to fit firm, and yet easy upon the Mind, because it represents God to be such a *Being*, as even our own Souls would desire; such a *Being* as both can, and will make us happy, unless we be wanting to our selves.

*By Faith* (saith the same Apostle, *Heb. xi. 8, 9, 10.*) Abraham, *when he was called to go out unto a Place, which he should after receive for an Inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By Faith, he sojourned in the Land of Promise, as in a strange Country, dwelling in Tabernacles, with Isaac and Jacob, the Heirs with him of the same Promise. For he looked for a City, which hath Foundations, whose Maker and Builder is God.* The hopeful Expectation which he had that God would in the most eminent Manner fulfil his own Promise, silenced all those Doubts that might otherwise have stagger'd his *Faith*, and taught him perfectly to acquiesce in God's Direction and Disposal, tho' ignorant at his first setting out, where his Lot was to be, and not suffered to enter upon the Possession of it, even when he came at it.

Once more (to use the Authority of the same Apostle, *Ver. 17, 18, 19.*) *By Faith* Abraham,



Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac, SER. XII.  
and he that had received the Promises, offered  
up his only begotten Son; of whom it was said,  
that in Isaac shall thy Seed be called: Account-  
ing that God was able to raise him up even  
from the Dead. He was firmly persuaded,  
it seems, and did verily expect, that God was  
both able and ready to restore his only Son,  
if need should be, even by an unheard of  
Miracle: And this *lively Hope* carried his  
*Faith* up to a Height that was far above all  
Difficulties; even parental Affection could  
not prevail, in the Behalf of *Isaac*, when  
God had once destin'd him for a *Sacrifice*,  
and the Appearance of an Impossibility could  
not tempt him to disbelieve what God had  
promised, or disobey what he had command-  
ed. This is a noble Instance to prove the ad-  
mirable Virtue which *Hope* has to produce  
*all Joy and Peace in believing*; that is, an  
entire Satisfaction and Acquiescence of Mind,  
in submitting to all that God shall think fit  
to impose, or require of us.

And doubtless it will have the same Effect  
proportionably in all other and more common  
Cases. For Example, if a Man is once  
comfortably persuaded upon the Assurance  
of

of *Hope*, that *all Things*, as *St. Paul* says, *shall work together for Good to them that love God* (Rom. viii. 28.) This *Persuasion* alone will quiet and satisfy his *Mind*, in *Spight* of any the greatest *Disappointments* or *Distresses*. For 'tis *God's Promise* that he solely depends upon, and that, he rests assured, can never fail. Nay, he rests equally assured, that *God* knows the best *Method*, and the fittest *Season* of accomplishing his own *Promise*: Nay indeed, that that *Condition*, whatever it be, which *God* thinks fit to reduce him to, however uneasy it may be to *Flesh* and *Blood*, however disastrous it may seem in the *Eye* of the *World*, is much more conducive to his *Good*, than any thing he could chuse for himself. And therefore, even when reduced to the greatest *Streight* or *Extremity*, he *will not let go his Confidence*, he will not part with that *Satisfaction*, which no earthly *Thing* can give or take away; but will say composedly in that submissive Strain of patient *Job*, (xiii. 15, 16.) *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: He also shall be my Salvation.* But

2. This *Joy and Peace* in believing, may also signify that inward *Complacency* or

*Peace*

*of Christian Hope consider'd.*

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*Peace of Conscience*, that is the Concomitant SER. XII.  
of a well-exercised and well-grounded *Faith*  
and *Hope*; as will easily be made appear.

For the immediate Objects of *Christian Hope*, are the Promises of God through Christ; more especially of those Promises that concern our everlasting Welfare and Happiness. And whosoever attentively considers the Tenor of these God's Promises, and has an equal Regard to the Conditions thereunto annexed, and can moreover, upon the most impartial Examination, answer for himself, that he has earnestly desired and endeavoured to perform these Conditions, with a Sincerity of Intention at least, though not a Perfection of Obedience, and that he is stedfastly resolved, by God's assisting Grace, to persist and proceed in the same good Way till he has finished the Course of his *Christian Warfare*; this Man's *Hope*, I say, is conceived upon a right Ground, it is cherished by proper Incentives, and 'tis supported by the best Evidence, even the Testimony of a good Conscience.

Agreeable to that of St. *John* (1 Ep. iii. 21.)  
*If our Heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God. This heavenly Hope*  
is

SER. XII. is a *Guest* only fit for a clear Conscience, it cannot lodge easily in a guilty Soul. Such a one may *believe* as the *Devils* do, and *tremble*; *tremble* at God's Threatnings, but not rejoyce at his Promises, because he knows he has no Interest in them. *But he that hath this Hope purifieth himself as God is pure* (1 Ep. *John* iii. 3.) It is his constant Exercise to have always a Conscience void of Offence; and this refreshes him continually with pleasing Reflections, and yields him a perfect Tranquillity of Mind, and a most serene Joy; it makes him happy for the present in the cheering Light of his Countenance, and secure for the future in the Reversion of his most precious Promises; and in this Sense he is filled with *all Joy and Peace in believing*. But

2dly, There is another Effect of this Grace, when once it has taken Possession of the Heart, and that is a more abundant encrease of it; which is also a Consequent upon the former.

For *Hope* has this in common with other Habits, that the more it is exercised, the more it improves, and the more it is confirmed. And when a *Christian* has once entertained

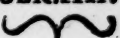


tained a *good Hope* of the Favour and Mercy SER. XII.  
of God, and finds and feels the Satisfaction  
of Mind thence arising; and when incited  
by this *Hope*, he endeavours to discharge his  
Duty toward God, and has the Approbation  
and Applause of his own Conscience for so  
doing; this is a fresh Encouragement to him,  
and a Spur to all his virtuous Endeavours;  
this adds Wings to his *Hope*, and Flames to  
his Desire; this raises his Expectation to a  
Pitch, and urges him on still more and  
more to Perfection, and animates him (with  
Saint Paul, *Phil. iii. 13.*) *to press toward the*  
*Mark, for the Prize of the High-Calling of*  
*God in Christ Jesus.*

And *Hope*, by these Steps, is sometimes  
advanced to such a Degree of Elevation, that  
it leaves all distrustful Fears far behind it,  
and emboldens the *persevering Christian* in  
some Transport to say with the same Saint  
Paul (2 *Tim. iv. 7, 8.*) *I have fought a*  
*good Fight: I have finished my Course: I*  
*have kept the Faith. Henceforth is laid up*  
*for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the*  
*Lord, the Righteous Judge shall give me at*  
*that Day.*

*W* Saint Paul, 'tis probable, might thus speak upon the Prospect of his approaching End, and the undoubted Assurance he had of a glorious Reward for his indefatigable Diligence, and unshaken Constancy in the Discharge of his ministerial Office. But yet he excludes not other *Christians* from a good Share in this *Hope*; for he adds, *and not to me only, but to all those who love his appearing*. Like the Servant that is ready with his Accounts, and therefore gladly expects his Master's coming, that he may quit himself of his Trust, and receive his Recompence. And though 'tis no Part of a *Christian's* Privilege, much less of his Duty, to be, or to think himself absolutely secure of Heaven and Happiness, whilst he is in this State of Trial (for Reasons formerly alledged) yet it is not to be denied but God may, if he please, make up the *Plerophory* of the humble Soul, that has been trained up to his Service by a long Exercise of stedfast *Hope*. I say, it is not to be denied but he may make up the *Plerophory* of such an one, by the internal Testimony of his blessed Spirit, and such a manifest Signature thereof impressed upon the Mind of the hopeful Expectant,

*of Christian Hope consider'd.* 351

as may set him quite beyond a Doubt of his SER. XII. own Salvation. 

This is what hath been observed too in a former Discourse. And though it is an extraordinary unpromised Grace and Favour, yet 'tis both pious and probable to suppose, that it has sometimes been and still is vouchsafed to some Persons, on some special Occasions, who have been eminent for their Labours or Sufferings, and the Patience of their *Hope* in undergoing them, that so the Severity of their Conflict may be sweetned by a Fore-taste of their Reward, and that others also, by their Example, might be encouraged confidently to persevere: For which End also Saint *Paul* thought fit to acquaint us with his own blest Experience of this Kind in the fore-cited Passage.

*Thirdly*, I pass on now to my third Head, viz. concerning the necessary Means of attaining this *Christian Grace*, and growing and improving in it. And they are chiefly these following, viz.

1<sup>st</sup>, A frequent Meditation upon God's great Attributes of Power, Truth, and Goodness. 2<sup>dly</sup>, A particular Recollection of  
God's

**SER. XII.** God's especial Promises, in favour of the sincere and penitent *Christian*. 3dly, A real Intention, Resolution, and Endeavour to perform the Conditions on our Part required. 4thly and lastly, a constant Recourse to God in Prayer, for the Assistance of his good Spirit. Of each of which a few brief Hints may suffice. And

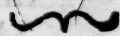
1st, The first Means is a frequent and attentive Meditation upon God's Attributes of Goodness, Veracity and Power. For a Man may believe the Existence of a God, and allow him in his own Thoughts to be infinite in all Sorts of Perfection; but such a general, notional, dead kind of *Faith* as this, can never beget a *lively Hope*. That will require a stricter Attention to those peculiar Attributes upon which *Hope* is founded, such as are his Goodness, Veracity and Power. And a serious and fixed Contemplation upon these Attributes, especially if often repeated, will soon give Being, and Life, and Vigour to our *Hope*. For since God is infinitely good, true and powerful, as often as we think upon these his most amiable Perfections, so often must we be immediately convinced that there is abundant Reason to place our Confidence in



in him, who is every way qualified to support it; because nothing can divert or defeat his gracious Purpose to do us good, to which the Benignity of his own Nature perpetually inclines him, or the Solemnity of his Promise has at any Time engaged him.

2dly, Therefore another special Means of attaining this Grace and cultivating it in our Hearts, is a particular Recollection of God's precious Promises and Declarations, in favour of the *penitent Christian*. Such as are those, *Come unto me, all ye that travel and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you* (Matt. xi. 28.) *So God loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life* (John iii. 16.) *This is a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Men to be received, that Jesus Christ came into the World to save Sinners.* (1 Tim. i. 15.) *If any Man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, and he is the Propitiation for our Sins.* (1 John ii. 17.) All which Promises (and many more that might be added) are so serious and so solemn, so clear and so full, so large and comprehensive, in a Word, every Way so cheering and reviving, that a particular Acquaintance with them,

SER. XII.



SER. XII. and Application of them, must in course sow the *good Seed of Hope* in the penitent Soul, that is to grow up to eternal Life, and quicken his Industry, *to make his Calling and Election sure*, by the Use of that which is the third Means, viz.

3dly, A real Intention and Resolution, and a hearty and sincere Endeavour to perform the Conditions on our Part required. For he that, upon a strict Scrutiny into his own Heart and Life, can by the Answer of a good Conscience pronounce for himself, that it has been his earnest Desire, his settled Purpose, and constant Study, to *keep God's holy Will and Commandments*, and that whereinfoever he has made any Breach upon his Duty, it has been his timely Care to repair it again by a serious Repentance ; I say, this Man, by a diligent Search into the Scripture, will soon perceive, that he beareth the plain Mark and Character of such a manner of Person, to whom the *Hope of the Promise* belongeth : For as Saint Paul saith, *The Foundation of God standeth sure* (2 Tim. ii. 19.) *having this Seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his.* And, let every one that nameth the Name of Christ depart from Iniquity. And the

Consciousness of his own Sincerity will, as SER. XI.  
 he grows in other Graces, proportionably  
 strengthen his *Hope*, and inspirit him with fresh  
 Vigour and Courage, *in running the Race that*  
*is set before him*, without starting aside from  
 the steady Course of Virtue, or stopping short  
 of the *Goal*, or the *Prize*.

4thly, The most necessary and the most  
 effectual Means, and that upon which the  
 whole Success depends, is a constant Recourse  
 to God in Prayer, for the Assistance of his  
*good Spirit*.

For Prayer, if we be constant and fervent  
 in it, has of itself a plain Tendency to fasten  
 our Meditations upon God's Attributes of  
 Goodness, Veracity, and Power, and upon  
 his most gracious Promises of Pardon and Sal-  
 vation, and to influence all our Thoughts and  
 Actions with a Sense of that Duty which we  
 owe to God, as well as of those Benefits  
 which we expect from him, or enjoy under  
 him; and for this very Reason it must needs  
 have an instrumental Efficacy in planting  
 and cherishing *Christian Hope*, because it fur-  
 thers and prospers all those other Means, that  
 are most conducive to it. But besides, *Hope*, as  
 a divine Grace, is a *Gift from God*, and it is con-

SER. XII.

ferred as the Text informs us, by the *Power of the Holy Ghost*. And 'tis a Gift which 'tis highly reasonable and requisite we should ask for, before we receive it, because in asking we not only testify our general Dependence upon God, but we do also exercise that Measure of *Hope* which we already have, whilst we beg for a further Accession to it: And we are plainly directed to pursue this Method by the Text itself, which is no other than a *benedictory Form of Prayer* to this very Purpose: And the Prevalency of such Prayers we have Encouragement sufficient to depend upon. The tenderest Father cannot be the thousandth part so ready to provide necessary Sustenance for his Child, at his Instance and Importunity, as God is to hear and answer such kind of Petitions. *For if they who are evil* (as our Saviour himself argues) *know how to give good Gifts unto their Children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit* (i. e. the Gifts and Graces of it, among which *Hope* is one) *to them that ask him?* (Luke xi. 13.)

Give me leave now in the last Place to draw some few Inferences from what has

been



been said, that may be useful for the Direction and Consolation of *Christians*. And

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1<sup>st</sup>. From what has been said, concerning the Nature of *Christian Hope*, we may easily collect wherein the two opposite Extremes do consist, of *Despair* I mean, and *Presumption*; two fatal Rocks, upon which many poor Souls have been shipwreck'd.

1. For *Despair*, if our *Hope*, as has been shewn, be founded upon the Promises of God, and implies a well-assured Reliance thereupon, then *Despair* must consist either in a total Rejection of his Promises, or a Renunciation of our particular Interest in them, through some strange *Misinterpretation* or unreasonable Suspicion of our own framing.

Thus, for Example, if a Man should possess himself industriously with a wicked Opinion, that the Soul is not immortal, or that there is no future State, notwithstanding all the explicate Declarations of Scripture to the contrary. This is a bare-fac'd Rejection of a most absolute and (one would think) undeniable Promise; and therefore 'tis *Despair* at once, and downright *Infidelity*.

So again, if any one will obstinately persuade himself, that 'tis utterly impossible to

*SER. XII. keep God's Commandments,* notwithstanding those exprefs Places of Scripture that give us Hopes of Happinefs, upon Condition of *keeping thofe Commandments*, that Man, I fay, interprets away the very Truth of fuch conditional Promifes, and makes them all but a folemn piece of *Mockery*: Which is, if not a Species of the Sin of *Defpair*, fo near a *Borderer* upon it, that the very next Confequence will plunge a Man into it. For to what Purpofe (may the *difconfoiate Wretch* fay to himfelf) is it to ftrive to perform a Condition that is impoffible? And this is enough at once to difpirit all his Hopes, and to enervate his Endeavours.

So in like manner, if notwithstanding all the Expoftulations with Sinners, and the earneft Exhortations and Invitations to Repentance; and all the repeated Declarations that *God is not willing that any fhould perifh, but would have all Men to be faved* (2 Peter iii. 9.) and all the moft exprefs Affertions, that our Lord *Jesus Chrift gave himfelf a Ransom for all* (1 Tim. ii. 6.) and *that he is the Propitiation for our Sins, even for the Sins of the whole World* (1 John ii. 2.) I fay, if any Man, notwithstanding all this clear Scripture Evidence,

dence, will be prying into the *hidden Decrees* SER. XII.  
of *God*, and fancy to himself, that he reads  
there his own *irreversible Doom* from all  
Eternity, this is to call in Question the very  
plainest of *God's Promises*, and to under-  
mine all his own Hopes. 'Tis a Precipice  
that, without a sudden Stop indeed, must  
hurry him into the very Depth of *Despair*.  
And it may be well worth the Considerati-  
on of some *Divines*, who love to be dealing  
in these *dangerous Secrets* afore-mentioned,  
and venting their crude Notions concerning  
them to the People, how much they may  
have contributed by this Means to the Di-  
straction and Ruin of many a heedless Soul.  
But to be sure it is the Duty, and ought  
to be the Care of every *Christian* that has  
any Reverence for *God's Word*, or any Con-  
cern for his own Peace and Welfare, not to  
set *God's Promises* and *Decrees* at odds, nor  
to indulge himself in such foolish and un-  
reasonable Thoughts as to give *Satan too*  
*manifest an Advantage* to ensnare and to un-  
do him.

Lastly, if any one, notwithstanding all  
the Gospel-Promises (so many, so liberal,  
so extensive and universal) of free Pardon

to the Sinner, upon his *unfeigned Repentance*, I say, if any one shall still suffer himself to think and persist unthankfully in the Thought, that *his* Sins in particular are too many, and too heinous to be capable of any Share in that Forgiveness that is promised; this is plainly to derogate not only from the Truth of Scripture, but from the infinite Mercy of God, and the infinite Merits of Christ; it is to reject and frustrate the Counsel of God against himself; it is the Sin of *Despair* in some of its worst Circumstances, and attended with the greatest Aggravations, because it generally hardens the *Wretch* in his Impenitence, and tempts him to give himself up to all manner of Licentiousness and Wick- edness; to live indeed as if he neither hoped to be saved, nor even cared to be saved. And when a Man has once sinned on to this desperate Pitch, he becomes altogether as fear- less, as he is hopeless; for though he hopes not to be saved, yet he even dares to be damned; so that Despair and Presumption join Hand in Hand at last to sink this *help- less Soul* into *irrecoverable Perdition*.

2dly, From what has been said concerning the Nature of *Christian Hope*, we may also learn



learn to know and avoid the other dangerous SER. XII.  
Extreme of *Presumption*. For if *Hope* im-  
plies (as has been shewn) a well-assured Ex-  
pectation of God's Promises, then *Presumpti-*  
*on* (which is the vitious Excess of Hope) must  
consist in a confident and ungrounded Ex-  
pectation of God's Mercy or Favour, with-  
out any Promise at all to build upon, or  
contrary to the plain Tenor of those Pro-  
mises that the Scripture makes known to us.

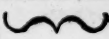
Give me leave, for Illustration sake, to  
produce two or three Examples of it.

As first, if any should take up that fond  
and gross Conceit, that Christ has perform-  
ed all Righteousness in our stead, and that  
what he has done will be most graciously  
imputed to *Us*; and that there is nothing  
on our Part left to do, but *to believe in him*,  
and to rely upon him; that this alone is  
sufficient to entitle us to Heaven, and carry  
us thither.

Why I say, this is so wild a Notion, so  
void of Reason in itself, so perverse a Misun-  
derstanding of the Gospel, so opposite to  
that express Assertion of our Redeemer, who  
should best know the Terms of our Salvation;  
*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord,*  
*shall*

*Ser. XII. shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven, (Matt. vii. 21.) that it can pass for no other, in sober Thinking, but a bold, unwarrantable Presumption.*

Again, if any one should strongly imagine, in looking through the false Glass of spiritual Pride, that he espies his own Name *written in the Book of Life, with the Adamantine Pen of eternal Predestination*, and should from thence, with the utmost Assurance conclude, that he is of the Number of those, who are ordained to be saved; and that 'tis impossible for *him* to fall from Grace, or to come short of Glory; I say, such a vain Imagination as this is plainly a most arrogant and sinful piece of Presumption, without any kind of reasonable Foundation. For if these *Decrees*, which the Man so confidently interprets in his own favour, be secret, how comes he to be so perfectly well acquainted with them? If they are revealed, where are they extant? Not in Scripture sure; for there is no such Promise there to be found, that *Calvin*, or *Beza*, or *any particular Man* shall, and *must* be saved at the last Day, as being *preordained* thereunto from all Eternity;

nity; and therefore 'tis highly *presumptuous* SRE. XII.  
for any Man so to persuade himself. 

Once more, if any should foolishly depend upon his future Repentance, which he is resolved however to delay all he can, or boldly cast himself upon God's great Mercy, at all Adventures, even whether he repent, or repent *not*; and should in the mean Time audaciously persist in a wicked Course of Life, without any further Consideration of his *latter End*, or Care about his *everlasting Salvation*: I say, this would be a *Proceeding*, unaccountable in itself, inconsistent with the Nature of God, and incompatible with all the Obligations of Religion, and most directly opposite to the Terms of the Gospel, and the express Declarations of Scripture, such as those, *If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments.* (Matt. xix. 17.) *Without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord.* (Heb. xii. 14.) *Know ye not, that the Unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* (1 Cor. vi. 9.) And many others of the like Importance.

That Man therefore that at once can indulge himself in Hopes and Practice so  
utterly

SER. XII. utterly irreconcilable, must needs be guilty of a most daring Presumption. For he acts the Part of a *desperate Bravo* indeed, that can, with so negligent an Air, set Damnation itself at Defiance.

3dly, We may observe from the foregoing Discourse (and 'tis an Observation that ought to be inculcated) that it is by no means a Property of *Christian Hope*, or an ordinary Ingredient therein, that he that *hath this Hope* should be absolutely and infallibly certain of his own Salvation. For the Promise is not absolute, but conditional: And an absolute Certainty cannot arise from a conditional Promise, unless a Man could be absolutely certain that he shall perform that Condition. And that no Man can be in particular, without an immediate Impression of the Spirit, or an express Revelation. An immediate Impression there may be, if God thinks fit, but 'tis more than is particularly promised, and therefore not ordinarily to be expected. And for express Revelation, there is no Footstep of any such. The whole Current of Scripture is against it; and every Man's inward Experience is  
a joint



a joint Contradiction to it. For the Heart SER. XII.  
of Man is deceitful above all Things, and  
desperately wicked; who can know it? saith  
the Prophet (*Jerem. xvii. 9.*) And there-  
fore the Apostle, with good Reason, ad-  
vises him that standeth by Faith, not to  
be high-minded, but fear, lest his Pride  
should be his Fall; and him that think-  
eth he stands, to take heed lest he fall; and  
his Security be his Ruin.

4thly and lastly, it may be gathered from  
what has been said, that a *Christian's Hope*  
may consist with some Degree of Fear,  
without incurring the Guilt of Distrust in  
God's Mercy. For 'tis only absolute Se-  
curity that totally excludes Fear. And ab-  
solute Security (as has been observed once  
and again) is not to be arrived at in this  
mutable and mortal State; in which a  
Man may have Reason (and but more than  
enough) to be suspicious and fearful of the  
Falseness and Fickleness of his own Heart,  
the Depravity of his Will, and the Frailty  
of his Flesh, when compared with that  
Multiplicity, Subtlety, and pressing Violence  
of the Temptations with which he is sur-  
rounded. But then this is not a Distrust  
of

SER. XII. of God, but a Distrust of himself, in whom he ought not, he cannot with any Safety confide. But it cannot be interpreted a Distrust of God, *i. e.* of his Promises, which are the Object of our *Trust* and *Hope*, because God hath no where promised to exempt Men wholly from Temptation, or to make them equal to the Angels, who excel in Strength on this Side Heaven. In short, such a Fear can in no wise amount to a sinful Distrust in God, unless it proceed further; unless the Experience we have of our manifold human Infirmities should make us rashly conclude, that even the Grace of God it self is not sufficient; and so tempt us to give our selves up for lost, and sit down in sullen Despondency. But if on the contrary, *the Sense of our Weakness adds Strength to our Faith*, and puts Spurs to our Diligence, and stirs us up to walk with the more Circumspection, and to look to our selves with the greater Solitude, this, amidst all our Fears, argues a *Predominancy of Hope*, of the true *purifying Hope*, that *maketh not ashamed*.

And this moderate Allay of *Fear* with our *Hope*, is what the Scripture itself both allows

*of Christian Hope consider'd.* 367

allows and prescribes. For we are directed SER. XII.  
by the *Psalmist* (*Psal. ii. 11.*) to *serve the*  
*Lord with Fear*, and by the *Apostle* expressly,  
*to work out our Salvation with Fear and*  
*trembling.* (*Philip. ii. 12.*) For (the Reason  
that he gives for it is worth our remarking)  
For, says he, (*Ver. 13.*) *it is God which*  
*worketh in us, both to will and to do, of his*  
*good Pleasure.* So that though the Experience  
of our own Infirmities may administer just  
Occasion of Fear to us, yet when we reflect  
upon the *All-sufficiency* of God's Grace, and  
consider that *his Strength is made perfect in*  
*Weakness* (*2 Cor. xii. 9.*) This will both  
quicken and corroborate our *Hope*, and give  
fresh Life to our Endeavours, in humble Con-  
fidence, that if we depend upon God's Assis-  
tance, and sue to him for it, he will work in  
us, and with us, and perform the good Work  
that he hath begun in us, *until the Day of*  
*Jesus Christ.*

*Now to God the Father, &c.*



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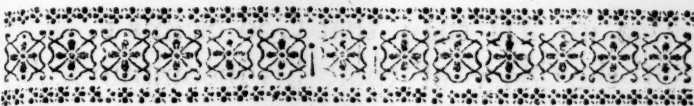
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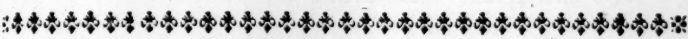
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# S E R M O N XIII.

Of God's Omnipresence.



JEREM. xxiii. 24.

*Can any hide himself in secret Places,  
that I shall not see him, saith the  
Lord? Do not I fill Heaven and  
Earth, saith the Lord?*

**H** *Heaven and Earth* are the two grand SERM. XIII.  
Extremities, within which, all Things  
that are, are comprehended and con-  
tained. And therefore when they are thus  
taken together, as they are in the Text, they  
do in the Language of Holy Scripture fig-  
nify the universal World; and consequently,  
when the Question is here directly put, *Do*

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*not*

*not I fill Heaven and Earth?* We can conceive no less than that God claims to himself the Glory of those his incommunicable Attributes, *Immensity* or *Omnipresence*: The Contemplation of which, although they are infinitely beyond our small Compass, will yet help to enlarge and improve our Thoughts, and fill our Minds with religious Wonder, Awe and Reverence.

My Business therefore at present shall be,

*First*, To confirm and illustrate the Doctrine of the Text. And

*Secondly*, To apply it to Practice. And

*First*, I shall endeavour to confirm and illustrate the Doctrine of the Text.

In order to which, I shall do these two things:

1<sup>st</sup>, I shall prove, that *Omnipresence* is an Attribute essentially belonging to the *Godhead*, and that both from Reason and Scripture. And

2<sup>dly</sup>, I shall represent the manner of God's *Omnipresence*, so far forth, as either Reason or Scripture give us any Light into it.

By

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By the *Omnipresence* of God I understand his actual Coexistence, and intimate Presence, with all Things, Places and Spaces ; implying an equal Impossibility of being excluded from any, or included and circumscribed by any.

And for Proof, in the first Place, that this is an Attribute inseparable from the *Deity*, we may have our immediate Recourse to the very *Idea* of God, as he is the first necessary self-existing Cause of all Things ; or as one expresses it, the authorless Author of all Being. For he that had not, could not have any antecedent Cause of his Being, can have no Bounds or Limits to his Being. And he whose Being is not so much as capable of any Bounds or Limits, must, by a sort of natural Necessity, be in every Place, and coexist with every Thing. So that the Infinity of God's Essence, and the Immenfity of his Presence, do necessarily infer each other. For if he be unlimited as to his Presence, it is because he is so in his Essence. Since it is impossible for a finite or limited Being to be in all Places at once. And on the other Hand, if he be unlimited in his Essence, he must also be so in his Presence ; because no Bounds

of Place or Space can confine a Being in Essence infinite.

It is the rational Result therefore of that natural Notion which we have of God, that he must be every where present. And this Notion appears to be more natural, because the *Heathens* themselves had the same Apprehensions, and express themselves sometimes pretty aptly, and sometimes even nobly, but always reverently concerning it.

But however, that the Glory of God might not be thought to depend on the frail Breath of Man, or the lame Collections of human Reason, the Scripture is very express and full, and frequent in ascribing this Attribute to God. Nay he himself makes the Challenge in his own Name, and demands our formal Assent both to his *Omniscience* and *Omnipresence*, in these Words before us: *Can any hide himself in secret Places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord: Do not I fill Heaven and Earth? saith the Lord.* And how does he *fill Heaven and Earth*? Not by his Wisdom and Power only (though of these also, the whole World is full) but in the primary and most proper Sense, by his essential Presence. For an Essence so compleatly  
 2 absolute



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absolute and infinite, must, as I have observed, of Necessity fill, and I may add, more than fill, the utmost Capacity of universal Space. For so indeed it fills it, as itself the mean while exceeds all possible Boundaries, and admits of no Circumscription. *The Lord he is God* (according to *Moses's* just Acknowledgment, *Deut. iv. 39.*) *in Heaven above, and in the Earth below*; but lest we should lessen his immense Greatness by our narrow Conceptions, we must confess with *Solomon* after all, *Behold the Heaven of Heavens are not able to contain thee.* (*1 Kings viii. 27.*)

And as no Compass can confine, so neither can any Distance escape, nor any Obstacle shut out, his all-penetrating Presence. Which, to seek no further, is most excellently set forth in those magnificent Words of the *Psalmist* (*Pf. cxxxix. the 7<sup>th</sup> and following Verses*) *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy Presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, thou art there; if I make my Bed in Hell, behold thou art there: If I take the Wings of the Morning, and dwell in the uttermost Parts of the Sea, even there shall thy Hand lead me, and thy Right Hand shall hold me.*

And let thus much suffice for the Proof of the *Divine Omnipresence*, both from the Suffrage of right Reason, and the most authentic Testimony of *Holy Writ*. I proceed, 2dly, To represent the manner of it, so far forth as either Reason or Scripture give us any Light into it.

But here it must with all Humility be owned, that such Knowledge is too excellent and wonderful for us: *For it is as high as Heaven, what canst thou do? It is deeper than Hell, what canst thou know? The Measure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea.* (Job xi. 8, 9.) And indeed if the infinite Essence of God (which is the true Foundation of his infinite Presence) could once be comprehended by us; they would both cease to be what they are, *i. e.* infinite. But since infinite they are, and must be, all Description must needs fall short in a Matter that no Elevation of Understanding can reach. And as to the *Manner*, we must thankfully content our selves with such an Account of it, as may at once do Justice to the absolute Perfection of the divine Nature; and help to excite our reverential Awe, and command our ready Obedience. And

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First then, the best and safest account that we are able to give of it is this: That God is universally and uniformly present to all Things; but yet so as he is entirely free from all those Imperfections, or Limitations, that are incident to Matter, or corporeal Magnitude. And consequently, though he coexists with all Things, yet he must not be thought to be coextended with any. For whatever is extended, has its several Dimensions of Length, Breadth, and Depth; which no immaterial Being or Spirit hath; which no infinite Being (as God is) can have; for whatsoever may be measured is not infinite.

Thus again, though God be coexistent with all Places, yet it is not, it cannot be, by any Diversity, or Division, or different Application of Parts, since he is composed of none. It is the Property of Body to be bounded by the Place in which it is contained, with which it coexists and corresponds in its several Parts, according as in their Situation they are severally applied. But God being simply one, it cannot be said of him, that he is here, and not there, or that he is more in one Place than another, or indeed confined in any; but he is equally and irrespectively

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present to all, and fills all, and more he would (if more there were) at once, by the indivisible Unity, and compleat Integrity of his Essence.

And suitable to the Dignity of this great Subject, it has always been the Wisdom and Caution of those that have been truly learned and pious, to remove all Imperfection from God, whenever they adventure to speak of his immense and divine Presence.

And among the Essays of this kind, Saint Bernard's [*Nusquam est, & Ubique est*] is an humble Offer. For (Allowance being made for the Harshness of the *English* Expression) God is no where, in regard there is no Place that can comprehend or contain him: But he is most certainly every where, because no Space, whether real or imaginary, can possibly put any Bar to his Presence. But that Strain of Saint Gregory's, upon the cxxxix<sup>th</sup> Psalm, is still more lofty, and not less cautious. [*Deus est intra omnia, non inclusus; extra omnia, non exclusus; supra omnia, non elatus; infra omnia, non depressus, &c.*] God is within all things, but not inclosed; without all things, but not excluded; above all things, but not exalted; by, in, and beneath all things, and yet not depressed.

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Give me leave to add to these, that apt Illustration of *Trismegistus*, which though commonly known, ceases not to surprize one with pleasing Admiration. viz. That God is a *Sphere*, whose *Center* is every where, whose *Circumference* is no where. For God is not unaptly resembled to a *Sphere*, which is in itself the most perfect, and in its Contents the most capacious of all Figures; and God is he that containeth all things. And he is resembled to a *Sphere*, whose *Circumference* is no where, because there is no Expansion of Space wide enough to encircle or comprehend him; and he is resembled to a *Sphere* whose *Center* is every where, to signify that he is indivisibly present to all, and every Part of the Creation, without any Composition of Parts in himself, or Coextension to any without himself.

I don't produce these, as accurate Descriptions of the *Divine Omnipresence*, for I have already said, it is utterly incomprehensible. And indeed all Attempts that can be made towards an Explanation of it, are but so many Arguments to prove, that it is above all human Expression and Conception. All that Reason can discover of it is this; and this

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this it very plainly discovers, from the very Nature of God, and the Representation of him in Scripture; that howsoever God is *Omnipresent*, it must be in such a manner, as will not subject him to the least *Shadow of Imperfection*: And pursuant to this,

2dly, Reason is also able to discover, that wheresoever God is present, he cannot be insignificantly or unactively present. His Presence must and will be operative and influential. For an infinite Essence can never be destitute of any possible Degree of Wisdom, Power, Goodness, and of all kind of Perfections; because whereinfoever it were wanting, therein it would be limited, and so not infinite. It follows therefore, that wherever God is present, by his Presence, there is he likewise by his Wisdom and Power, and Goodness, and by the positive Effects of them. For these his Attributes are in Truth identically the same with his Essence; and no otherwise distinguishable from it, than we have been wont to conceive of them in our partial and *inadequate* Apprehensions of his unsearchable Being.

However it be, that we might not bewilder ourselves in meer Speculation, the Scripture

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ture gives an easy Clew to our Thoughts in this Matter, at least so far as we are concerned to know it. For you shall hardly meet with any Mention or Description of God's infinite Presence, but it is constantly attended and enlivened (as it were) with the most express Assertion of his Knowledge and Power, and the like; thus the *Psalmist* assures us (in the xxxiii<sup>d</sup> *Psalms* the 5<sup>th</sup> Verse) *That the Earth is full of his Goodness*: Sufficiently intimating, that infinite Essence and infinite Goodness are equally unconfined, and therefore inseparable Companions. And the Prophet *Jeremiah* directly informs us in the Text and Context, what sort of Presence God is, even an all-powerful and all-penetrating Presence. *Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret Places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill Heaven and Earth? saith the Lord.* And that the Influence of God's Presence, and Power, and Knowledge, are all of equal, that is, of infinite Extent, is incontestibly clear, from those weighty Words of the Prophet *Amos* (Chap. ix. Ver. 2, 3.) *Though they dig into Hell, thence shall my Hand take them; though*  
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*they climb up to Heaven, thence will I bring them down; and though they hide themselves in the Top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my Sight in the Bottom of the Sea, thence will I command the Serpent, and he shall bite them.*

And *Isaiab* in like manner links his essential Presence with his Knowledge and Power (in the *xl<sup>th</sup>* Chapter *27<sup>th</sup>* and *28<sup>th</sup>* Verses.) *Why sayest thou, O Jacob, my Way is hidden from the Lord, and my Judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the Ends of the Earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his Understanding. Nay the holy Psalmist (Psal. cxxxix.) after he had made his awful Confession, that no Distance could set him out of the Reach of God's Presence or Power, no Darkness screen him from his piercing Eye, subjoins, that he might not flatter himself with the Possibility of any Concealment (Ver. 13.) For thou hast possessed my Reins; thou hast covered me in my Mother's Womb.* Implying, that God is intimately present in the very Region of all our secret Cogitations, Desires, and Inclinations;  
and



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and thoroughly acquainted with all our Springs and Movements, since our whole Fabrick is his own *wonderful Workmanship*. SERM.  
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But not to launch out too far in an Argument so broad and deep as this, the least that we can conclude from these and the like Passages of Holy Writ is, that the divine Presence, and Knowledge, and Power, are alike to be resolved into his *infinite Essence*; and by Consequence, wherever he is essentially present, that there also he exerts his Knowledge and Power. And this we may reasonably think is the oftener inculcated upon us in Scripture, to make the Sense of his *omniscient* and *omnipresent* Presence the more awakening, and the Impression thence arising the more lasting.

And thus I have endeavoured to prove and illustrate the Doctrine of the Text.

1<sup>st</sup>. By proving, that Omnipresence is an Attribute essential to the Godhead; and then by accounting for the *Modus*, and Manner of it, so far forth as we are concerned to enquire after it, and have any Light from Reason or Revelation to guide our Enquiries.

Secondly,

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I propos'd in the second Place) that I apply this useful Doctrine to Practice. For it is not to be imagin'd, that the Lineaments of God's *majestick Presence* should be so held forth, as they are to our View, in the lively Oracles of his Word, purely for Ostentation of his own Greatness, or on Purpose only to amuse and affright us: No; the firm Belief and serious Consideration of this incommunicable Attribute, so frequently recommended to us in Scripture, is doubtless of admirable Use and Influence, in the Direction both of our Faith and Manners; and a very powerful Incitement towards the Discharge of our whole *Christian Duty*. Give me leave, I beseech you, to make you sensible of it in some important Particulars. As

1<sup>st</sup>, The firm Belief of this great *Attribute*, is among other Means, one of the best, to settle our Faith in all Points, and to reduce Reason to a convenient Subjection; and indeed to make the whole Scheme of the *Christian Religion* appear rational and credible, to every sober and impartial Considerer.

For the main Exception to *Christianity*, as to the doctrinal Part of it, is this; that it magisterially

gisterially requires our Assent to Things that are above, and (as they will needs have it) contrary to Reason. Because they are such as are not to be understood, explained, or comprehended by the natural Force of Reason, but do really baffle and confound all our Faculties; and yet these Things must be swallowed implicitly notwithstanding, as being proposed under the venerable Title of *Mysteries*. SERM.  
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This is the Exception, that *vain Men*, who would be wise, wiser indeed than God himself, disturb their own Heads with. But see whether it directly tends! For let them speak out, is not God a *Mystery*, a most *unfathomable Mystery*? Is not his infinite Essence and necessary Existence a *Mystery*? Is not his *Omnipresence* a *Mystery*? Is not the Manner of it unintelligible? Although the Thing itself be plainly revealed. The Conclusion therefore is flatly this, whosoever believes a God, and the *Mysteries* of his Being, Nature, and Attributes, may, and ought for the same Reason to believe his Gospel, which contains the *Mysteries* of his Providence and Grace, no less incomprehensible, than the former. And whosoever rejects the one may  
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with as good a Grace reject the other. For there is no *Medium*: But he that is too nice upon these Terms to become a *Christian*, must, if he will pursue his own Principles, be absurd enough to turn *Atheist*: Whereas he that is well grounded in *natural Religion*, will be enabled by the same Light to discover the Reasonableness of *Christianity*, and induced also firmly to adhere to it.

2dly, The Belief and Consideration of the *Attribute* of God's *Omnipresence*, is very instrumental to beget in our Minds an Affiance in his particular Providence, and a perpetual Regard to him for it. For they who in Opinion confine God's Providence within the Heavens, or to Generals only, without caring for Particulars, were led into the Mistake, in all Probability, by another gross Conceit, by judging of God after the manner of Men, and fondly imagining that *he*, like one of us, must be unable to attend to such a vast Variety and Number of Things, without *Weariness* or *Distraction*.

But now, whosoever stedfastly believes, that God is every where present by Vertue of his infinite Essence, and that his *essential Presence* is always accompanied with *infinite Knowledge*,



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Knowledge, Power, &c. that Man may soon persuade himself, that 'tis as easy for such a Being to take care of all, as one. Because the whole System of Creatures, which large as it is, must be owned to be finite, can never come up to, much less exceed the Compass of infinite Knowledge and Power. And this Persuasion once well fixed in the Mind, is the proper Ground of the religious Veneration we owe to God, of our faithful and dutiful Dependence upon him, of our constant Recourse to him for Support and Relief in all our Wants, and all our Straits, and as constant Return to him with our thankful Acknowledgments for all his Benefits.

3dly, The Belief and Consideration of the *Divine Omnipresence* (if duly applied) is the greatest Encouragement to Virtue, and the most effectual Restraint upon Sin that is possible. For since the *Eyes of the Lord are in every Place, beholding the Evil and the Good.* (Prov. xv. 3.) Surely if any *ingenuous Hope* can allure us, or any Shame or Fear deter us, we must endeavour to be virtuous, we cannot dare to persist in our Wickedness. For let us consider calmly with ourselves, can there be a nobler Spur to Virtue,

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than is the immediate Presence of God with us? and the ever-watchful Eye of his Providence upon us? Of that God, who is not only the Spectator, but the judicious Observer, the Approver, nay the Director and Promoter of all that is good in us? and will finally be our Rewarder for it. Were a *Soldier* commanded upon some hazardous Enterprize, in the Presence of his King, himself a *gallant Prince*, and Encourager of martial Bravery; would he not make his utmost Effort to atchieve it? If a *Scholar* were to maintain a publick *Disputation* before some *great Judge*, and *Patron of Learning*, would he not muster up all his Reading and his Reasoning, to acquit himself with Honour? Shall the Applause of Men, and that *airy Bubble* Reputation, or a little sordid temporal Interest, shall such Motives as these prevail upon us in lesser Matters? And shall not the Inspection and Approbation of God, and the *Crown of Glory*, that he has proposed as the Prize of the *Christian Victor*, be sufficient to animate our Affections, and quicken our Endeavours, in the Things that concern our everlasting Peace and Happiness? And let us consider again on the other hand, can there

there be a severer Curb to Sin, than is the awful Presence of an all-seeing and all-powerful God? whether we regard the Shame, or the Terror, that it naturally carries with it.

It is not an ill Expedient that of <sup>a</sup> Seneca's, when he advises us to make choice of a *Cato*, or a *Scipio*, and imagine him to be a constant Inspector of our Actions; and out of Reverence to his Authority, to keep ourselves innocent, and even our Retirements unpolluted. But this is certain (whatever the Effect of such an Imagination might be) that the actual Presence of any *grave Person*, would dash even a *confident Sinner* out of Countenance, and hold him back from the Commission of any notorious Wickedness; nay even the Presence of a Child would go near to startle him, and divert him from his Purpose for the Time: And shall the very Aspect of a grave, good Man, though not armed with Authority; nay of a Child that hath hardly Knowledge to distinguish between Good and Evil, be sufficient to give a sudden Check to

<sup>a</sup> Senec. Epist. xi. op. Edit. Lipsij, p. 404. Aliquis vir bonus nobis eligendus est, ac semper ante oculos habendus, sit sic tanquam illo spectante vivamus, & omnia tanquam illo vidente faciamus.

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the Sinner, in the Execution of his sinful Desires: And shall he not much more be abashed and confounded at the *dread Presence* of *infinite Majesty*? How can he dare to sin on, in the very Face of his *omniscient Judge*, and his *omnipotent Avenger*? It is a Consideration this, that must needs make him tremble, if he be not desperately hardened indeed, and grown stupid, and insensible of his Danger.

4thly, The Belief and Consideration of God's *Omnipresence* is the best Remedy against all manner of Self-Deceit and Hypocrisy; because it serves effectually to convince Men, that no Concealment or Palliation of their Crimes will serve them in any stead, or avail to bring them off with Credit and Safety.

It is a just and a pertinent Observation that *Seneca* quotes from *Epicurus*, viz. <sup>a</sup> *Contingere nocenti potest, ut lateat: Latendi Fides non potest.* The Sinner may have the Hap to lie concealed, but the Assurance of it he cannot have. This is true, according to the Notion and Discovery of Men, of which he is perpetually in Fear, if not in Danger.

<sup>a</sup> Seneca Epist. xcvi. op. p. 609. B. p. 630. A.



But 'tis unavoidable with respect to God, SERM. XIII. whose Presence nothing can escape, whose Penetration nothing can obstruct.

Not the closest and obscurest Recesses : For the *Darkness hideth not from him; the Darkness and Light to him are both alike.* (Psal. cxxxix. 12.) Not the cunningest Disguises ; for *all Things are naked and open to the Eyes of him, with whom we have to do.* (Heb. iv. 13.) Not the secretest Contrivances, Counsels, Cogitations, or Desires, though not yet ripened into Act; for he dives into the very Seat of all these *Volitions and Preparations, he trieth the very Heart and Reins* (Psal. vii. 9.) *even to give to every one according to his Ways, and according to the Fruit of his Doings.* (Jer. xvii. 10.)

O consider this, ye that forget God, and regard not his Presence. The *Adulterer*, whose Eye waiteth for the *Twilight*, the *Thief* that lurketh in the Thicket, the *Murderer* that slayeth the Innocent in secret Places, the *Plotters* that herd together in *private Cabals*, the *Dissembler* under the Cloak of Friendship, and the *perjured Wretch* that hugs himself in his Villany, the *Hypocrite* under the Mask of Religion : Oh ! consider this, all ye *that work*, and even *will Iniquity*, and think

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to cover it; consider, and be afraid, be afraid of the Presence, from which nothing can shelter you; nay be afraid of the Secrecy that can afford you no Security. *For the Day will come, when God shall judge the Secrets of Mens Hearts (Rom. ii. 16.) and bring to Light the hidden Things of Darknes, and make manifest the Counsels of the Hearts (1 Cor. iv. 5.) and then neither Dens nor Caves, nor Rocks shall be able to hide you from the Face of him, that sitteth on the Throne, and the wrathful Presence of the Lamb: But Shame and Confusion, Lamentation and Desperation, shall be your Portion for ever.*

5thly, The Belief and Consideration of God's Omnipresence, is of peculiar Use both to incite and to regulate our Devotions. It is Encouragement sufficient to us, to *make known our Request to God*, at all Times, and in all Places, and upon all Occasions: Because where-ever we are, this we need not doubt, that God is *nigh unto all them that call upon him; and his Ears are open to their Cry*, nay even to their secret and mental Ejaculations. But as God is every where present, so is he in most especial Manner, in the Midst of those, *who are gathered together in*  
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*his House.* There he is ready to communicate with his Saints; to receive and answer their Petitions, and to give a Blessing to them in the solemn Use of his own *Appointments*. Here therefore we should be ready also to meet him and approach his heavenly Presence, and wait upon his Ordinances with the greatest Seriousness and Composedness, with the profoundest Awe and Reverence, with the humblest Prostration of Soul and Body, with the strictest Attention of Thought, and the most ardent Affection and Desire. Were we admitted to the same Familiarity with some *earthly Prince*, and entitled to the same Privileges, we should think no Service or Honour too much, in Acknowledgment of the *Royal Favour*. And when the *dread Majesty of Heaven and Earth* graciously vouchsafes us his own Presence; and admits, nay invites us into the *Antecourt of Heaven*, his *holy Temple*; ought we not to testify our thankful Sense of this marvellous Condescension, by the Frequency, and Fervency and Purity of our Devotions?

But besides our Attendance upon God in the Publick Assembly, we ought also to approve the Sincerity of our Hearts towards

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him, by seeking him in private; and keeping up a secret, but constant Intercourse between him and our own Souls. For God's general Presence consecrates the very Retirements of those that are truly devout. And the Couch, the Closet, or the Bed, are instead of a *Sanctuary* to a *clean and upright Heart*. And the Oblations offered upon this private Altar, are so much the more acceptable; because they proceed from the purest Intention, the most unfeigned Love, and are always accompanied with a most lively and most regardful Sense of God's infinite Presence. And therefore they who thus *pray unto* and *praise their Father which is in secret*, may humbly rest assured, *that their Father which seeth in secret, will reward them openly.* (Matt. vi. 4.)

6thly, and lastly, but briefly, The Belief and Consideration of God's *Omnipresence* will both teach and oblige us to live reverently and circumspectly, as in the Sight of God, and as being strictly accountable to him for every Thought, and Word, and Action throughout our whole Lives. For God, as the Author of the Book of *Wisdom* well represents him (Chap. i. 7, 10, 11.)



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is *Witness of the Reins, and a true Beholder of the Heart, and a Hearer of the Tongue; his Ear is the Ear of Jealousy, and the Ear of Jealousy heareth all Things, and the Noise of Murmurings is not hid. And there is no Word so secret, that it shall go for nought. And since it is impossible to escape the strict Observation, or the severe Inquisition, or the just Judgment of God, let us accustom our selves much and often to meditate upon God's immediate Presence and Inspection; let us awaken the Sense of it by frequent Recollection; let us bethink our selves, with the thoughtful Seneca; that whithersoever we turn, he still meets us; because (as he aptly expresses himself) *Nihil illi vacat, opus suum implet*: Nothing is void of him, he filleth his own Work. An Expression almost equivalent to that of the Text: *Do not I fill Heaven and Earth? saith the Lord.* Let us also with holy David (Psal. xvi. 8.) *set the Lord always before us; and with faithful Abraham, walk before him.* For this is certainly the best Rule of Perfection, and the best Help to attain to it. It is indeed so powerful a Motive to a circumspect and unblameable Conversation, and to Purity of Heart and Intention; that nothing could abate the*

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the Force of it, but a most stupid Thoughtlessness and Inconsideration. And alas! Stupidity itself will not serve the Turn. Men may, 'tis true, industriously avoid God's *awful Presence*, and strive to banish him out of all their Thoughts. But whether they will think upon it, or no, he is still their constant Observer, and will shew himself at last to be their righteous Judge, and terrible Avenger. And even whether they will or no, they shall be made sensible of his Presence, either when his just Judgments shall overtake them, or his final Vengeance lay hold of them, and hale them to Execution. And if they cannot so much as endure the Thoughts of his *Presence* now, how insupportable must it needs be, when he shall appear in all the Terrors of his *unveiled Majesty*, in Flames of Fire, to devour his Adversaries? Oh! therefore let us acquaint our selves with God, whilst the Opportunity is in our Hands; and let us live under a constant Sense of his Presence now, that we may not be confounded at it hereafter; but rather prepared by a Life of Holiness here, to see and enjoy his blissful Presence for ever. *Amen.*

*Now to God the Father, &c.*

# S E R M O N XIV.

The Necessity of keeping our Hearts  
with all Diligence.

PROVERBS iv. 23.

*Keep thy Heart with all Diligence,  
for out of it are the Issues of Life.*

**T**HIS is a Precept of great Weight, SERM. XIV.  
and of admirable Use in the Conduct  
of human Life; and as such, the  
Wise Man bespeaks the Attention of his Dis-  
ciples to it, in the three Verses foregoing;  
and when he comes to deliver it, recommends  
it to their most diligent Observation. *Keep  
thy Heart with all Diligence, for out of it are  
the Issues of Life.*

And

*The Necessity of keeping our*

And in Hopes to engage your present Attention in hearing, and quicken your future Diligence in practising, I shall

*First*, Open the Words to you, and then,  
*Secondly*, Shew the peculiar Excellency and Wisdom of the Precept contained in them. After that I shall press the Observation of it with some proper Reasons. And

Lastly, I shall subjoin some few Rules, or Directions, that may make it the more easy to be observed. And

*First*, In Order to open the Meaning of the Words to you, I shall, *1st*, Enquire what the Object of our Care, the *Heart*, is. And *2dly*, What the *keeping of it with all Diligence* may imply. And *3dly*, What the Reason assigned for it imports, *for out of it are the Issues of Life*. And

*1st*, For the Object of our Care, the *Heart*, we know in its primary Signification, stands for the principal and most noble Entrail of the Body, the Fountain of Life, and all vital Operations; and which therefore in ancient *Philosophy* was supposed to be the immediate Seat of the human Soul, and all its internal Cogitations,



Cogitations, Appetites, and Passions. And SERM.  
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out more Circumlocution, it is here to be understood for the Soul, together with all the various Thoughts, Devices, Intents and Purposes, Inclinations and Dispositions, that either busy the Brain, and entertain the Imagination; or are treasured up in the Memory, or possess the Affections. The Soul, I say, with all this Train, which is indeed inseparable from it, is what *Solomon* here commends to us, as the prime Object of our Care. And

*2dly*, We are to *keep it with all Diligence*. Which may imply, that it ought to be watched over, with all possible Circumspection; or preserved, as we read in the Margin of our Bibles, above all keeping, as being the choicest Thing, and the most worthy of our Care of any that belongs to us: Or, lastly, that it should be kept (as some Translations have it ἀπὸ παντὸς φυλάγματος) or protected and secured from every Thing that may prove injurious to it, and ought to be avoided.

All which several Senses do so well consist together, that they may fairly be reduced to one, which will amount in short to this, that the *Heart* or Soul of Man ought to be very circumspectly watched, and tenderly preserved, as being in Nature very precious, and withal very liable to Injury or Mischief.

Now the *Soul* being a spiritual Substance, is not in Reality exposed to any external Harm or Violence. *Physically* it cannot be hurt, (at least by any created Power) but *morally* it may, with its own consent; that is, by admitting, embracing, or cherishing any Thing that is morally evil or sinful, that will fill it with Turpitude and Guilt; and render it odious in *God's purer Eyes*, and obnoxious to his just Wrath and Vengeance.

Sin then is the only Thing that is hurtful to the Soul; and Sin, as Saint *John* defines it, is the *Transgression of God's Law*. (1 Ep. *John* iii. 4.) And every Motion or Inclination of the Soul prompting us to do what God hath forbidden, or to omit what God hath commanded; I say, every such Motion or Inclination, once consented to, is sinful, as being contrariant to God's holy Law; and the Will, by yielding its Consent, is plainly

plainly rebellious, whatever other Consideration may happen to prove a Check upon the outward Act, and hinder its Execution.

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And 'tis against such lurking Sins as these, that are apt to steal into the Heart, and find their private Harbour there, yet we are obliged to guard so carefully and constantly even against all evil Imaginations, or wicked Designs and Purposes; all unlawful Appetites, and irregular Affections, or whatever it is, that may *defile the inner Man*, though it should be without any other visible Blemish: Against all such, I say, we ought to guard, with all possible Care and Vigilance; and it will require the stricter Vigilance, because such is inbred Corruption of our Hearts, and such the Subtlety of our malicious *Seducer*, that certain sudden Motions or Tendencies to Evil will ever and anon most unaccountably dart into the Mind, and play very briskly upon the Imaginations, and endeavour by all the most insinuating Arts to win and engage our Affections. Against these *sly Intruders* therefore, we ought to keep the Avenues carefully shut, and when at any Time they press in upon us at unawares, we should immediately summon up all our Powers to resist them,  
and

and call in the Aids of divine Grace to enable us to repel them, or at least to withhold our Wills from embracing them with any degree of Approbation. And our Comfort is, that if we do use our best Diligence, we may still keep our Hearts secure and unhurt, notwithstanding any Attack that can be made upon us. For whether they be the Suggestions of our own frail Flesh, or the Injections of the *infernal Spirit*, that haunt and discompose our Thoughts; this we may be assured, that they shall never be imputed to us for Sin, so long as they are perfectly unconsented to by the Will, and rejected with Abhorrence. And this is all that our best Diligence can arrive at; for *keep the Heart from being tempted* we cannot; but from yielding to the Temptation, by God's Assistance we may; and to excite us to employ our utmost Endeavours to this Purpose, there is a Reason of Moment added in the Text.

3dly, *Because out of it are the Issues of Life.* That is, all the Words and Actions, and the whole Process of a Man's Life are but Effects springing from the *Heart*, as their principal Cause, and are as its Streams derived from the *Heart*, as their first Source. And as 'tis natural



tural for the Stream to carry the Tincture and Relish of the Fountain along with it; so is it for the Behaviour of a Man to be answerable to the Disposition of his *Heart*. To this our own Experience sufficiently witnesseth, and the Wisdom of God hath expressly taught us, that a good Man, out of the good Treasure of his *Heart*, bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil Man out of the evil Treasure of his *Heart*, bringeth forth that which is evil. For out of the abundance of the *Heart*, the Mouth speaketh. [Matt. xii. 34, 35.] And so also does the Hand act, and the whole Life is conducted. The *Heart* then being the *Matrix* in which all moral Good and Evil is conceived, and the main Principle of all Action, it ought to be very carefully kept, lest the Fountain being once corrupted, all its Streams should become filthy and noisome. And here is the more need of all this Watchfulness, because the Naughtiness of the *Heart*, though only secretly cherished, and not suffered to break forth into any Overt-Act, is offensive to God's Holiness, and repugnant to his Law; and therefore is alone sufficient to make a Man a Transgressor in his Sight. And what has hitherto been said, may suffice

to let us into the Meaning of the Words, and acquaint us what the *Heart* is, which *Solomon* recommends to our *diligent keeping*; and what that *keeping* of it doth import; as also what Degree of Care and Diligence is required of us, and for what Reason it deserves it at our Hands. I proceed,

*Secondly*, In the second Place, to shew the peculiar Excellency and Wisdom of the Precept here laid down of *keeping our Hearts with all Diligence*.

And indeed it shews itself at first View to be a Precept every Way right worthy of God to enjoin, and equally *behoeful* for Men to observe.

It is certainly right worthy of God to enjoin. For *God is the Searcher of all Hearts*, so the Scripture every where represents him; and it is the Prerogative that he assumes to himself in a distinguishing Manner. *I the Lord search the Heart, I try the Reins* (says he by the Mouth of the Prophet *Jeremiah*, Chap. xvii. Ver. 10.) And he is pleased to assign the peculiar End and Use of this his incommunicable Attribute, even *to give to every Man according to his Ways, and accord-*  
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ing to the Fruit of his Doings. This it is that qualifies him both to be a *perfect Lawgiver*, and an *unerring Judge*. One main Defect of human Laws is, that *Men* cannot prescribe to the inward Thoughts and Devices of the Heart; because they cannot pretend to dive into them; they can take no Cognisance of them indeed any farther forth than they are expressed in Words, or betray'd in Action. And therefore a great deal of the Malignity that lurks within the Heart, must of Necessity go unrestrained by human Laws, even because 'tis undiscovered.

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But nothing is hid from God's all-piercing Eye: He needs not the Tongue to be the Interpreter of Mens Minds, he waits not for the Execution, to judge of their Intents and Purposes; but every the least Tendency and secret Motion of their Souls, though not yet ripened into Act, or ever like to be, lies *naked and open to his immediate Inspection*.

And since God has so direct and deep an Insight into the *Hearts* of all Men; it was highly becoming a *Being*, who is as *perfect in Holiness*, as he is in Knowledge, to make a Law worthy of himself, such as would reach to the very bottom of the *Heart*, and

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be an universal Rule of Righteousness to Men, as well in Thought, as in Word and Deed.

He could not be supposed indeed to require any Thing less *than Truth in the inward Parts*, or to accept of any Thing less than the Integrity and Purity of the Heart, because *he is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity* with Approbation; and yet too penetrating to overlook any that ever was conceived in the Heart of Man, even though it were stifled before it came to full Maturity.

Besides, he who is so intimately acquainted with the whole Frame of the *Heart*, knew it to be the main Spring of all our Activity, and for that Reason, necessary to be kept in right Order, and with all possible Exactness; even because *out of the Heart proceed evil Thoughts, Murders, Adulteries, Fornications, Thefts, False-Witness, Blasphemies*. (Matt. xv. 19.)

And all these Irregularities proceeding originally from within, the *Most Holy* was too wise to suffer them in the *first Mover*, and then go about to suppress them in the *After-Act*. He was too wise to set the *Sluice-Gates* wide open, and then *forbid the rushing of the Waters*: He foresaw that any such dangerous  
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Liberty indulged to the Heart, would naturally break forth into all Kind of Immorality and Licentiousness of Life; and therefore he thought fit to lay his special Restraint there, where all irregular Motions take their first Rise.

It appears therefore, that it was every Way well worthy of the infinite Holiness, Knowledge and Wisdom of God, as to restrain the Heart by his own *pure and undefiled Law*; so to enjoin us *to keep it with all Diligence*, within the Rules he has prescribed.

2dly, And it is no less behoveful for Men to be under this Restriction, and to be obliged to keep this constant Watch. For if Men were strictly tied up to Innocency of Life, and yet left loose to all the Wandrings of Desire, that might sally from the Heart; the Condition would have been very unequal, and extremely difficult (if possible) to be fulfilled. For *Concupiscence* is a very stirring active Principle that pushes Men almost unavoidably upon the eager Pursuit of those forbidden Objects, which most court and gratify their fleshly Appetites: And it were almost as easy a Task to keep the Fire from burning, whilst we supply it with the most combusti-

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ble Fuel; as to refrain from vitious Actions, whilst Men cherish any *evil Concupiscence in the Heart*. The only Way therefore to render the Precepts of Virtue truly significant, and our Duty either practicable or comfortable to us, was to withdraw as much as might be all such Fuel, and to defend it from the least Air of such consenting Thoughts, as would quickly blow it up into a Flame. And this shews all at once the Commodiousness of this Commandment, seemingly so strict of *keeping our own Hearts*, because it disposes our Business into a right Method. For now our first work in Order, is to regard the chief Springs of inward Motion, to curb all kind of inordinate Desires, not to harbour them even in Thought, with any Delight or Complacency, and upon no Terms to suffer the Will to yield her Consent unto them.

And whosoever makes this his habitual Care, must by Degrees gain as entire a Mastery over his own Lusts, and as much the Command of himself as frail Nature can well attain to; and he will by this Means find himself much eased of the burthenome Part of his Duty, and enabled to order his whole Conversation aright, or preserve it free at least

least from any great Blame or Blemish. For SERM.  
XIV. he that is fearful of entertaining so much as a wanton Thought or Imagination, will much more avoid and abhor the grosser Act of Uncleanness. He that is careful not to indulge so much as a covetous Wish of that which is his Neighbour's, will much less be tempted to stoop to any of the sordid Arts of Covetousness, or make haste to be rich by any dishonest Method. He that has constantly used himself to check the inward Resentments of Anger, and keep them from boiling up into a Ferment, will in no Case be provoked to execute his own Revenge with Malice and Cruelty.

To be short, an innocent *Heart* naturally makes an innocent Life; but unless we take good Care to maintain the former, we must unavoidably miscarry in the latter. So very expedient is it for us even to be under this strict Obligation of *keeping our own Hearts with all Diligence.* I proceed now in the

*Third* Place to press the Observation of this Precept upon you by proper Reasons and Motives.

But in this, I have already in some Measure prevented my self; for Reasons have been intimated all along as I went, sufficient to determine any considering Person; and what Motives can be thought of indeed more likely to prevail, than the mighty Expediency; nay and the Necessity too of the Thing itself? And who that is engaged in any Affair of Weight and Importance, would not willingly take Pains to make himself Master of that Art, which would rid him at once of all Impediments and Difficulties, and make his whole Business easy of Dispatch to him? And this is the very Case now under Consideration; for if we did but take due Care of keeping a Guard and Check upon the Motions of our own *Hearts*, that alone would make our whole Duty feasible, and a Course of Virtue delightful. Who again would not apply himself in the first Place to do that with all his Might, without which all the rest of his Labour will prove in vain, nay without which he must of necessity miscarry, and be undone! And this too is visibly the present Case; for if we leave our *Hearts* unguarded, it will be found an impracticable Thing to preserve our *Conversation blameless*; and by  
thus



thus carelessly betraying our Innocence, we do in Effect cast away our selves, our very Souls; we forfeit both the Comforts of this Life, and the Hopes of a better; we deliver up our selves to the Tyranny of our own masterless Lusts, in order to be delivered over to a worse *Tormentor* hereafter.

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And I hope no more needs be said, to awaken Men to all possible Diligence, in *keeping their own Hearts.*

Nor let any one be discouraged from setting about it in good earnest, by prepossessing himself, that that which is to remove all other Difficulties, is itself the greatest Difficulty; and that no Diligence can be effectual to conquer it. It must be owned indeed, so subtle are the Workings of Man's *Heart*, so sudden many of its Motions, so infinite the Variety of Thoughts that crowd into it, that some will and do now and then steal in unobserved, that are very idle, vain, and foolish, if not directly irreligious; nay and these kind of Escapes will happen sometimes to well-disposed Souls; Levities will mingle ever and anon with their most serious Meditations, and Wanderings a little interrupt their most intense Devotions. All this, I say, must be allowed

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allowed to be true : But it is as true, that those Excursions and Starts that are too nimble for any Deliberation will not be imputed to us for Sin ; they can pass for no other than meer natural Infirmities: For it is the Consent of the Will that makes our Thoughts properly our own, and the Evil or Guilt of them chargeable to our Account. And as for those Escapes that happen sometimes to good Men, it is evidently without the Consent of their Will, because they are always complaining of them, and striving against them. And though it may be too hard a Task for human Infirmities altogether to prevent such Escapes, yet it is certainly in our Power to withhold our Wills from embracing them with Approbation, and repeating them with Pleasure, and always affording them a Welcome. I say, this is in our Power by the Help of God's Grace ; which (by the Way) is a Word of Comfort to those who complain of being troubled with *evil Thoughts*, and whose Complaints at the same Time are a Proof, that they are utterly unconsenting to them. And consequently 'tis in our Power upon a diligent Application, *to keep our Hearts*, though not unattempted by the Invasion of any *evil Thoughts*,

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*Thoughts*, yet unhurt and unpolluted by them. And though so strict and constant a Guard as this will require, may still be attended with some Difficulties, yet with due Circumspection, and habitual Use, it's no more than may be master'd. To facilitate which,

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*Fourthly*, I come now in the last Place, to lay down some brief Rules and Directions, that may be serviceable to this Purpose. And

*1<sup>st</sup>*, In order to this End, it will be necessary to find our selves some lawful Employment. For the Soul of Man is an active, busy Spirit, that loves always to be employ'd some Way or other: And rather than lie quite idle, it will be apt to suffer itself to be determined towards that which is evil. And the *watchful Tempter* knows and finds our leisure Minutes to be the most favourable Season for his Insinuations; he finds it an easy Change to dispose the Mind from Idleness to Wickedness. For while our Time lies upon our Hands, every flattering Object will draw our Eyes after it, every Thing that promises any Pleasure or Satisfaction, finds an open Passage to the *Heart*, and a void Space there: And so the Devil striking in with our own corrupt

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corrupt Inclinations, we are insensibly led away of our own Lusts, and enticed into Sin. If therefore we would be as effectually vigilant to defend our selves from Mischief, as our subtle Enemy is, to lead us into it; we must be sure to keep our Minds intent upon the Business of our *Vocation*; and fill up all the Vacancies of Time with something that may be either useful and improving, or at least innocently diverting.

2dly, In order to keep our Hearts in Innocence, it will be highly necessary to avoid all such Enticements to Sin, as will be most likely to insinuate into our Thoughts, and win upon our Affections. For some Objects there are, and some Occasions, so unhappily suited to Men's natural *Complexions* and *Propensities*; that if they be not very heedfully observed, they will leave an ill Impression upon their Minds. For Instance (among many others) the loose Images, and ludicrous and profane Wit, with which our modern *Poetry*, especially the *Dramatick*, is usually stuffed out, is but too likely to raise *unchaste Desires* and *impious* and *atheistical* Thoughts in such Heads and Hearts as are not thoroughly seasoned with a true Sense of Religion; and there-



fore such dangerous Entertainments ought SERM.  
XIV. carefully to be avoided by them. And in our whole Intercourse, especially in our Diversions (which is the most slippery Part of Life) we ought industriously to decline every thing that may be apt to leave the least Stain upon the Thoughts, and either beget, cherish, or strengthen any Inclination to Evil.

3dly, If we would keep our *Hearts* to good Purpose, it will be needful to enter into a strict Scrutiny with them frequently, nay daily; and examine very particularly what wicked Desires or Imaginations have endeavoured to intrude themselves, and whether they were faintly resisted, or stoutly repulsed with a firm Resolution; if any such be found lurking in any of the secret Foldings of the *Heart*, instantly to drive them thence, and double our Guard against them for the Time to come, and never more to allow them a willing Admittance, or a quiet Abode with us. Such a Self-Examination as this constantly and carefully repeated, would leave no Room for the unclean Spirit to enter and take Possession of us; or even the *Heart of Man*, *deceitful as it is*, to delude or betray itself.

4thly, If

4thly, If we would be sure to make the Guard we place about our own *Hearts* too strong for any Attempts, we must make it our perpetual Care likewise to keep up a lively and vigorous Sense of God's all-penetrating Knowledge, and that impartial and unerring Judgment to which we shall at last be subjected constantly in our Minds: For if wicked Men would be very loth to have the Secrets of their Souls exposed, in all their Nakedness and Filthiness, even to those that are as wicked as themselves; and if good Men would be much ashamed to have all the Sal-lies of irregular Desire, all the Follies and Vanity that intermingle with their private Thoughts, discovered even to their kindest Friends; how much more must it abash us all, to consider, that God is intimately present and acquainted with our inmost Conceptions, and all our Depths and Reaches; and how much more must it confound us to remember, that *God shall one Day judge the Secrets of Men*, and that for all our guilty Secrets we shall then be openly arraigned, and plainly convicted, and justly condemned? Surely this awful Reflection once well imprinted, and often renewed upon any serious Mind,

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Mind, must effectually drive out all evil SERM.  
Thoughts, and like the *Flaming Sword* placed XIV.  
at the east of *Eden*, keep the Way against their  
entring there any more.

*stbly* and lastly, To make such Impressi-  
ons lasting, and all our other Care and Pains  
no less effectual, we ought above all Things  
to lift up our Eyes constantly unto God, and  
pour out our Souls before him in secret Prayer.  
For Prayer, besides that it is the Means of  
procuring the divine Aid, does by its proper  
Tendency at once exalt and purify the *Heart*;  
it draws off the Affections from the Earth and  
earthly Things, and fixes them on the Things  
that are above. Whosoever desires therefore  
to maintain his Intercourse with God, and  
endeavours to put himself into a right Frame  
of Spirit for it, will soon find himself obliged  
to banish all vain and sinful Thoughts; he  
must of Necessity, or else he will be quickly  
forced to quit this holy and heavenly Exercise.  
For he that would prostrate himself before  
the divine Majesty in humble Confessions and  
Deprecations, can neither endure to look in-  
wards, nor presume to look upwards with  
any Hope or Comfort, unless he resolve at the  
same Time, to *cleanse himself from all Filthi-*

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*ness of the Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God. (2 Corinth. vii. 1.)*

Prayer therefore is the best Preservative against the Defilement of the *Heart*; and that our Diligence may be at last successful in *keeping it*, let us always *watch and pray* with the holy *Psalmist* (Ps. li. 10.) amidst the frequent Incursions of mental Temptation; *Create in us a clean Heart, O God, and renew a right Spirit within us.*

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, Three Persons, but One God, be ascribed, as is due, all Praise, Glory, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, now, henceforth and for evermore.  
*Amen.*





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 S E R M O N XV.

The Duty of forgiving Injuries con-  
 sider'd.

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MATT. vi. 14, 15.

*For if ye forgive Men their Trespases,  
 then your heavenly Father will also  
 forgive you.*

*But if ye forgive not Men their Tref-  
 passes, neither will your Father for-  
 give your Trespases.*

O UR blessed Lord, in teaching us to SER. XV.  
 pray, as in that admirable Petition, ~~~~~  
<sup>a</sup> *Forgive us our Debts, as we for-  
 give our Debtors,* has made us in a Manner

<sup>a</sup> See Vol. III. Se m. XI.

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the

SER. XV. the Dispensers of our own Pardon. The  
 ~~~~~ Petition being so couched, as must necessarily  
 put us in Mind of the Qualification that ought
 always to accompany our Prayers, to make
 them available for Pardon; and must at the
 same Time deter us from praying for it at all,
 unless we know our selves to be so qualified.
 And if we can but persuade our selves to *put*
on Bowels of Mercy one towards another, if we
 can but freely *forgive*, we may comfortably
 pray, we may confidently hope, that we shall
 be abundantly *forgiven*. But if we cannot
 find in our Hearts to comply with such equal
 Terms, nor even so much as to *lift up our*
Hands without Wrath, then do we render
 our selves at once incapable of Pardon, and
 undeserving of all Pity. For upon the Ob-
 servation or Neglect of this Condition, our
 Doom doth finally and justly depend, as it is
 expressly asserted in the Words of my Text,
For if ye forgive Men their Trespases, then
your heavenly Father will also forgive you.
But if ye forgive not Men their Trespases,
('tis but just you should take what follows)
neither will your Father forgive you your Tref-
passes. In handling of which Words I shall,

First,

First, Enquire into the Tenor of this Con-^{SER. XV.}
dition upon which we are emboldened to pray
for the Remission of our Sins.

Secondly, I shall shew the Obligation thence
arising, and lying upon us, also to forgive
those who have any ways offended or injured
us, which (in Saint *Luke's* Phrase) is every
one *that is indebted to us*.

Thirdly, I shall examine what the Extent
of this Obligation may be, and how far we
are bound by it.

Fourthly, I shall shew the Reasonableness
and Expediency of acting according there-
unto, as well as the Folly and Danger of the
contrary, which taken together, I hope may
be a sufficient Motive to your Practice.

Fifthly and lastly, I shall conclude with
an earnest Exhortation directed to such as it
may concern. And

First, I shall enquire into the Tenor of
this Condition, upon which we are embolden-
ed to pray for the *Forgiveness of our Sins*.
Which as it is expressed in my Text is both
positive and negative. And as it turns upon
this double Hinge, *the Door of Salvation* (to
borrow a Scripture Allusion) is either fairly

set open before us, or will be finally shut against us. And for the positive Part of it, it is to be observed,

1st, That it must not be taken in an absolute Sense, exclusive of all other Conditions; as if this alone were the whole Sum of our Duty, and all that is necessary to entitle us to God's Mercy.

'Tis true, *to be merciful, as our Father also is merciful*, is among others one of the best Qualifications we can be furnished with; because it bespeaks at once a cheerful Obedience to a Precept that God hath thought fit to make the *Test* of our *Ingenuity*, and a towardsly Imitation of one of the most amiable of his divine Perfections.

We ought therefore *to be merciful, as he is merciful, that we may be like unto him, as dear Children*. And having attained to this, we are in a fair Way *to be perfect, as he is perfect*, because 'tis the Height and Perfection of all Goodness, *to do Good* (as God does) *to the unworthy and unthankful*, and to be ready to *forgive* (as he is) the most *injurious and provoking*.

And this, as 'tis one of the highest (considering the Rashness and Violence of the Passion

Passion of Anger) 'tis one of the hardest Attainments of a *Christian*; and therefore he who is able to quit himself like a Man in this difficult Trial, it may reasonably be presumed, will be both encouraged and enabled to go on to Perfection, and be as punctual and as careful in the Discharge of every other Part of his Duty.

This benign and forgiving Temper therefore, as being so eminent amongst the *Christian* Virtues, is here proposed, as if it were the sole and single Condition of our obtaining God's Pardon. Not that the Performance of this Duty can atone, or satisfy for the Neglect of others, but because where this is the habitual Disposition of the Mind, there is a good Foundation laid for all other Graces; inasmuch as the like Conquest over our own Lusts and Passions, the like Subjection of our Wills to the Will of God in other Instances, would suffice to make our Obedience as entire, as frail Nature can maintain, and our Repentance for all our other Sins and Infirmities, available for Pardon.

Thus far therefore the Condition will positively be made good, *if ye forgive Men their Trespases*; that is, if ye out of an ha-

SRE.XV. bitual Disposition to keep all God's Commands, are ready to do your Duty in this trying Instance in particular, *then will your heavenly Father forgive you; i. e.* for an Encouragement to your future Obedience, God will accept this, as it were a lawful Tender of Duty, and pardon all your past Offences. But

2dly, The negative Part of the Condition is peremptory and conclusive. *If ye forgive not Men their Trespases, neither will your Father forgive your Trespases.* Nor can it with any Reason be expected he should: For when a Man is implacable to that Degree, that neither the Hopes of God's Mercy can persuade him, nor the Dread of his Vengeance constrain him, to *forgive an offending Brother*, there is a violent Presumption, that such a one is an utter Stranger to all manner of Godliness, and in no Respect qualified for Pardon, as he should be.

For as Saint *John* argues (1 Ep. iv. 20. pertinently to this Case) *He that loveth not his Brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen? i. e.* He who is wanting in common Charity to his Neighbour, when he has the most sensible and familiar Motives, all the Ties of Nature and Society

Society to engage him to it, how is it possible SER. XV.
that the Love of God should dwell in that
Heart, or the genuine Effects of that Love,
which is a Desire to please, and be beloved
of him, who is a Being all spiritual and
divine, in whom there is nothing to attract
the Sense or work upon the Passions?

And besides if it could be supposed (as
reasonably it cannot) that the malicious and
revengeful Man should make any Conscience
of the other Parts of his Duty, yet his Un-
charitableness alone is enough to exclude him
Heaven. For 'tis a bold Infringement of that
very Duty, to which this Mercy is eminent-
ly promised, and a deliberate Commission of
that very Sin, against which, this Threaten-
ing is directly levelled. So that in Effect 'tis
an obstinate and presumptuous Refusal of the
very Terms of Salvation. And he that will
not be saved upon God's Terms, must be
content to abide the Issue: For if he is resolv-
ed *not to forgive*, he *shall not*, he *cannot be*
forgiven.

The Condition therefore appears to be such,
that if we take Care to fulfil it; it must cer-
tainly put us into a Capacity of Pardon, and
a most hopeful State of Salvation; but if we

SER. XV. wilfully neglect it, it deprives us both of the Hope and the Possibility. Such then being the Condition on our Part required, I shall only observe,

3dly, That in order to fulfil it punctually as we ought, we must take Care not to clog it with any unnecessary Restrictions. To avoid which, our best Rule will be to copy after the divine *Philanthropy* (God's Love of Mankind) a Compassion so far, as with all humble Reverence we may. For Allowance must in Decency be made for the infinite Distance between God and us. God forgives as a supreme Redeemer and Governor, we as Fellow-Creatures, and Fellow-Servants; he as the most *High* and *Holy God*, we as sinful Dust and Ashes; he as exercising his sovereign Prerogative, we as doing our Duty in Obedience to his Commands. God forgives none (it would not consist with his Majesty indeed to forgive any) but who first seek him earnestly in Prayer: But this is no Warrant for us to stand strictly upon the like Submission and Supplication. God forgives none (his Holiness will not permit it) but those who are sincerely penitent: But it is not proper for us to insist upon the same rigorously with

with our Brethren, because we have neither *Ser. XV.*
Innocence enough to bear out our Authority in
demanding, nor yet Discernment enough to
judge of the Sincerity of their Repentance.

Lastly, God forgives none (his Wisdom
and Justice would by no Means allow it)
without a Compensation first made to his in-
jured Honour: But this will never justify our
vain presumptuous Demands of Satisfaction,
and Reparation for every Trifle.

No! we must not pretend to dispense Par-
don by Vertue of any inherent Power; we
must consider our selves at the same Time as
Subjects and Offenders too; and in all duti-
ful Subjection we must forgive, not just as
we think good, but just as God has com-
manded. And if God's Commandment be
general, and equally extended to all Persons,
and all Cases, we must not dare to put our
own *peevish Exceptions* into his *Act of Grace*,
we must not be so narrow-spirited, as to di-
stribute that sparingly, which it is his Will
should be universally communicated.

And let so much suffice to be observed con-
cerning the Tenor of that Condition upon
which we are emboldened to pray for the
Forgiveness of Sins. I proceed,

Secondly, To shew the Obligation hence arising that lies upon us also *to forgive our Brethren their Trespases*.

For it is not meer arbitrary Will that binds this Obligation upon us, the Obligation (even setting aside the Authority of the Imposer with which it is back'd) being manifestly grounded both upon Equity and Gratitude. And

1st, We are obliged to it in all Equity. For 'tis in Effect but the very same Thing that we all expect from other Men, especially if we be conscious of any Offence given, or Injury done to any Man; and are sensible that the Revenge is likely to fall heavy on our own Heads. Then we are pretty sure to be loud and large enough in the Praises of *Christian Meekness* and *Forbearance*; and if we do not meet with all that Tenderness, which since it concerns our selves, we cannot but think our just Due; we immediately appeal to God and Man, against the *inhuman* and *unchristian* Practices of our Adversary.

Now what I would infer from hence (as I think I fairly may) is, that what is every Body's Claim, when the Case falls out to be their own, is Matter of common Right; and consequently upon this Score, since Trespases

passes will sometimes happen, we are all SER.XV. equally obliged to a *mutual Forbearance* and *Forgiveness*.

But then, when we call to Mind our manifold and grievous Transgressions against God (which nothing can exceed but his *manifest* and *great Mercies*) it must needs appear the most equitable of all Things, for us to sacrifice all our private Quarrels and Resentments, to his blessed Will, and gracious Commandment. For (as the wise Son of *Sirach* justly expostulates (*Eccl. xxviii. 3.*) *One Man beareth Hatred against another, and doth he seek Pardon of the Lord? He sheweth no Mercy to a Man that is like unto himself, and doth he ask Forgiveness of his own Sins?* Certainly the Iniquity of such a Practice, as well as the Folly of the Expectation, is most inexcusable; unless it could be supposed, that God is inferior to his own Creatures; that his Honour is of less Concern to him, than our Reputation is to us; and that our Trespases one against another have more *Malignity* in them than our Sins against our Maker. But

2dly, We are still more strictly obliged to this, in Point of Gratitude; Gratitude, I say, towards

SER. XV. towards God our great Creator, who made

us what we are; our kind Preserver, who gave us all we have; our compassionate Redeemer, who sent his own Son to seek us when we were lost, and to die for us when we were Enemies; and our merciful Judge, who is ever ready to accept, and to absolve us upon our Repentance; and is moreover, notwithstanding our many and grievous Backslidings, continually courting us by his good Spirit, to embrace the Terms of our Salvation, and be for ever happy. And what mighty thing is it that he requires after all to capacitate us for all this Favour? Why the *forgiving of Injuries*! That's the hard Condition that he lays the chief Stress upon. That is to say, God the King of Kings, who hath forgiven, and doth daily forgive, and we trust will finally forgive us *Talents*. That is (as is plainly imply'd in that *Parable*) heavy and heinous Offences; and *ten thousands* of *Talents*, Offences without Number. He only expects, that we should remit for his Sake, and in Remembrance of his exceeding Bounty, perhaps an *hundred Pence*; that is, some few trivial Matters, scarce worthy the Name of Injuries; but to be sure of no Moment

ment or Consideration in Comparifon. And SER.XV.
are we not obliged therefore on this Account
to fhew Compaffion to our Fellow-Servants,
even as God inclines to have Pity on us? This
fure is no more than what common Ingenui-
ty would engage us to do, even though they,
that is, our Fellow-Servants, were every whit
as obnoxious to us as we are to God, and the
Cafe were every way parallel. But fince God
is infinitely *higher than the higheft*, and the
Trespaffes which he is willing to forgive are
infinitely more and greater than any Thing
that can happen betwixt Man and Man.
Certainly the Refufal of fo eafy a Return to
fuch abundant Mercy, is the very Pitch of
Ingratitude and Bafenefs, aggravated with
the laft Degree of Contempt and Indignity.
Upon the whole therefore, we are undoubted-
ly obliged to the Obfervance of this gracious
Condition (befides the ftrict Obedience we
owe to God) in Point both of common
Equity, and common Gratitude. But

Thirdly, It will be proper here to examine
what the Extent of this Obligation is, or
how far we are bound by it. And this being
Matter of nice Difquifition, I fhall ufe my
beft

SER. XV. best Caution, that I may not entangle Conscience needlessly on the one Hand, nor give too great a loose to Revenge on the other. And here

1st, If Saint *Peter's* Question should be put, *How oft shall my Brother sin against me, and I forgive him?* (Matt. xviii. 21.) The blessed *Jesus* has resolved it so very plain, that there is no Room left even for Cavil; *I say not unto thee, until seven times* (which Flesh and Blood would think perhaps more than enough) *but until seventy times seven.* (ver. 22.) i. e. a finite Number standing for an indefinite; as often as it can be imagined, or he can be supposed to reiterate his Injuries. And by the way, it is observable in this Reply of our *Saviour's*, that he made no Account at all of that foolish Objection, that is commonly brought against what the World calls too much Easiness in forgiving; namely, that it is the Way to have Injuries multiplied upon our Heads, 'till they grow insupportable. Whereas on the contrary, it may truly be alledged, that such incomparable Mildness and Sweetness of Temper is one of the likeliest Means to win upon an Enemy, and gain a perfect Conquest over him. But however

the Success is like to be, our Obedience is SER.XV.
nevertheless due unto God, and with him
the Event may very safely be trusted.

2dly, It may be made a Question perhaps,
whether we are obliged to forgive *all alike*,
without any Distinction, be they penitent, or
be they otherwise? And this really looks so
much the more questionable, because 'tis our
Saviour's own Direction (*Luke xvii. 3.*) *If
thy Brother trespass against thee, rebuke him,
and if he repent, forgive him*; which may
seem at least to imply, that if he repent
not, then he is not to be forgiven. But to
this it is readily answered, that we are most
indispensably obliged to *forgive all*, but *not
all alike*. For 'tis fit a Difference should
be made, and Charity as well as Justice will
have it so.

Him that is truly penitent, and has given
the best Assurances that he is so, we ought to
embrace with all Frankness, yea and Tender-
ness too; and we should study to engage and
fix him too by repeated Instances of Kindness,
that so he may be confirmed in his good Mind,
and we may live together in mutual good
Confidence.

And

SER. XV. And as for such as persist obstinate and implacable in their Enmity, we are bound to *forgive them* too; but not, I think, to take them into our *Bosoms*, but to forgive them to be sure, so far as not to harbour the least Thought or Desire of Revenge against them. And on the other Hand, to afford them a Place in that common Charity, which is due to every Man under the Notion of a *Neighbour*, and to be ready moreover to do them any special good Office, if Need should so require; always taking Care (for fear of being mistaken) to treat them in a quite contrary Manner to what they do us; that is, *to bless them that curse us, to do Good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that despitefully use us, and persecute us.* Which is our Lord's most express Precept, and ought to silence all our Doubts in this Matter, and quell all Resentments, even against our bitterest and most unrelenting Enemies.

3dly, If it should be farther questioned, whether we are obliged to *forgive Injuries* of all Sorts and Sizes, without insisting upon any Recompence or Satisfaction? To this I answer, that we are most undoubtedly bound to *forgive all*; i. e. I mean, not to *revenge any*; but yet

yet in some Cafes it may be both allowable SER. XV. and convenient too, to bring the Offender to *legal Punishment*, or to require a *legal Reparation* from him.

But this *Proceeding*, mistake it not, is a quite different Thing from *Revenge*. For *Revenge* is refolved upon in Anger and Ill-Will, and profecuted with mischievous Intention by Right or by Wrong. Whereas a *legal Punishment* or *Reparation* is a Matter to be always determined by the *Law*, which is in all Cafes difpaffionate and impartial.

And no Doubt, when a Man is injured to that Degree in his Body or Estate, Liberty or good Name, that it would be an intolerable Inconvenience, both to himfelf and thofe that belong to him, tamely to fubmit to it; I fay, in this Cafe he may, and ought to have Recourfe to the Law; not only for his own private Relief, but alfo for the publick Example fake; only with this Caution, that the Man's Spleen or Paflion ought to be no Judge of the Damage, Promoter, or Party in the Profecution; for if that once be fuffered, every the leaft Trefpafs will be thought infufferably great, and the Law fhall only be called in as the *Executioner*, to make the Revenge more

SER.XV. vexatious and cruel. Whereas our Saviour's Precept is, *to turn the other Cheek, to part with Cloak and Coat too, and to go two Miles for one.* (Matt. v. 39, 40, 41.) *i. e.* To bear Wrongs patiently so long as they are any thing tolerable: And when they are no longer so, then indeed it is lawful to seek for Redress, provided it be in a lawful Manner, and so as to do our selves Right, and not *retaliate* and double the Wrong upon those that gave the Provocation: For that is no better than pure *Revenge*, which is in no Case to be allowed.

And what has been said in Answer to the Queries proposed may, I hope, in good Measure serve to inform us how far our Obligation to *forgive Injuries* extends.

I shall only add, that an Excess on the forgiving Part is an Error that is very rarely committed, and there is but little Fear of being too much a *Christian* in this Particular: Corrupt Nature is rather apt to be too favourable a *Casuist* for itself and to admit of Exceptions where there is no Room for them, and allow a Liberty, where none is given. And therefore we ought, if we be wise, not to set Snares for our own Consciences, by entering into too nice an Enquiry, how far precisely

cisely we are bound to go in forgiving, and where we may venture to stop ; or how small a Share of this kind of Charity may suffice. No Doubt, it would be much a safer Course to be ready to forgive, as frankly and as heartily, as much and as often as we have any Occasion offered of forgiving ; and that in the hardest Cases that can reasonably be put, or tolerably born ; lest if we be still seeking for Evasions and Excuses, whenever the Condition presses hard upon us, we should forfeit our Title to the Forgiveness of God, when most we shall stand in need of it. Which brings me to my

Fourth Particular, viz. the manifest Expediency and singular Advantage of complying with this our *Christian Duty*, even in its utmost Extent ; and the vast Inconvenience and Mischief of the contrary ; both which together, I should hope, might prove a Motive to influence your Practice.

And here I might observe with Abundance of Truth, that a mild and forgiving Temper is of all Things the easiest to a Man's self, and the most amiable to others ; that it procures many Friends, and can hardly make any

SER. XV. Enemies; and for those that will be so *gratis*,
 it for the most part defeats and disarms them,
 and is innocently revenged upon them; by a
 resolute Patience, that will tire all the Efforts
 of Malice, by soft Language, and a meek De-
 portment, which will melt them into Pity in
 spite of themselves; or by the truly generous
 and *Christian Returns of Good for Evil*, which
 must cover them with Shame, or else work
 their Conversion.

And on the other Hand, I might truly
 alledge, that *Revenge* is one of the most self-
 tormenting Passions that infests human Na-
 ture; that it often turns upon itself, and (like
 the little *angry Animal* that is the true Emblem
 of it) suffers more Mischief by losing its *Sting*,
 than it is able to do by the Wound it gives;
 and that even when it is most successful,
 it seldom gains its Point, so as to make it
 an entire Victory. For there will always be
 a sufficient Stock of Ill-Nature going to an-
 swer all Provocations, and punctually to re-
 pay a shrewd Turn with Interest, when Op-
 portunity serves. And therefore, whoever
 makes this his own Practice, must expect at
 some Time or other to meet with his Match,
 or at least to have his Life perpetually em-
 broiled

broiled in Troubles. But not to enlarge up-^{SER. XV.}
on these Topicks at present, I shall only argue
from my Text. And so long as this Text
holds good, I think it must be allowed me,
that it is the safest, the wisest, the most
reasonable Thing a Man can do, to *forgive his*
Enemy. For if we could but make a right
Judgment of Things, there is scarce a Friend
to be found that is at all Turns so ready to do
good Offices, as a watchful Enemy to do
Mischief. For he is always industrious to pry
into our Faults, and to expose and aggravate
them, or else to charge us falsely, and load
us with Calumny and Slander: He takes a
great deal of Pains to vex and spite us, and
is continually pelting us with Injuries, and in-
sulting us, whenever he gets the Advantage,
with Contempt and Insolence. That is to
say, in other Words, he is constantly exer-
cising and improving us; he is teaching us
to be *good Christians*, and ensuring the *Chri-*
stian's Reward to us; he is recommending us
to an Interest in God's special Favour, and
labouring to put our Salvation into our own
Power, and to ratify it by the Seal of that sure
Promise; *If ye forgive Men their Trespases,*
then will your heavenly Father also forgive you
your Trespases.

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But now on the contrary, there is nothing so blind, so rash, so furious, and so mischievous to itself in its Fury as *Revenge*; no Man so desperately fool-hardy, so madly bent upon his own Destruction, as he that is of a *vindictive Spirit*, that values his Humour and his Will beyond his Happiness, and hazards his Damnation for a very poor Revenge. Hazard it, did I say? Nay he renders it certain and inevitable. For he scornfully refuses the very Condition of Pardon; he prays (if he dare pray at all) not for it, but against it; in the Bitterness of his Soul, he calls upon God to be his Avenger, and defies him to the Execution of this terrible Threatening.

If ye forgive not Men their Trespases, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you your Trespases. And executed it will be according to his accursed Prayer. For as the Lord of the Servant who had no Compassion on his Fellow-Servant was wroth, and delivered him to the Tormentors, till he should pay all that was due to him. So likewise (says the compassionate Jesus *Matt. xviii. 35.* But no longer so, where there is no Place for it) shall my heavenly Father do also unto you if ye from your Hearts forgive not every one his Brother their Trespases. I come now, Fifthly

Fifthly and lastly, to conclude with an SER. XV. earnest Exhortation, directed to such as it may concern.

And here I may venture publickly to demand, where is that *angry, peevish Mortal*, or (for fear they should think themselves wronged in Matter of Title) where is the Man of that great Spirit, and nice Resentment, that cannot submit even to be saved upon the Terms above-mentioned? Let him answer for himself: Does he think Salvation a Thing so little worth, that it is not to be purchased at so dear a Rate? Or does he imagine the Pleasure of *Revenge* to be so incomparably sweet, that the very Remembrance of it should be able to quench the Sense of Pain, even in *Hell-Fire*? I believe this is more than any Man will presume to speak out. But what can be said then? Is the Forgiveness of Injuries an impossible Condition? Or is it an unreasonable Imposition? In the Nature of the Thing sure it can never be thought impossible: And considering the vast Encouragement given, it must not be said to be unreasonable. But yet in some particular Cases (for that is what they would mutter) it is extremely rigorous, and almost beyond

SRE.XV. all Reason. I was in Hopes I had already obviated most of the Difficulties that belong to this Subject. But let them name the particular Case that pinches hardest, if it be but one of a thousand. And upon this Occasion, the Man of Honour 'tis like may be provoked to step forth and assert his own Cause, as thinking it a most insufferable Thing, that it should be in the Power of every *Wretch* to affront or injure such a Man as he is, without allowing him the *Satisfaction of the Sword*, which with him is the *last Decision of all Controversies*: And this he thinks the *Casuits ill-bred* to deny him. But with all Submission to him, his Case has in Effect been considered before; and a *legal Satisfaction*, where it is of Weight enough to deserve or require it, has already been allowed him. But if it be a Matter that is not, or must not be trusted with the Law, I am sure it cannot deserve such mighty Indignation. For suppose a Man to be never so unhandsomely reviled, or contemptuously treated, or falsely aspersed; how comes it to pass that the Ill-Language that he receives from an Equal (admit it be from an Inferior) must be thought a greater Reflection upon his Honour, than all the Oaths and

and Imprecations, in which he vents his *Passion* and vows his *Revenge*, are upon his *Maker's*? How comes it to pass, that he can so easily forgive himself the notorious Violation of God's Laws, when the meer Breach of Good-Manners in his own Account is a Crime that is *irremissible*? What is it that makes the very Name of *Fool* or *Liar* to be so much more dishonourable than to be an *actual Murderer*? And how comes it to be thought a sufficient Vindication, for a Man to prove himself the latter, in order to avoid the Imputation of the former? Such *Maxims*, and such Proceedings as these are altogether unaccountable, and I had almost said unpardonable too. For they that make their *Sword* the *Umpire* of every little Difference, do always incur the Guilt of *Murder*, and do often die in the very Act of their *bloody Revenge*. And how *they* should be acquitted at God's high Tribunal, no Repentance or Reconciliation intervening, is a Secret that the Gospel makes not known.

Let not therefore the *false Idea of Honour*, nor the mistaken Scandal of passing for a *Coward*, push any Man upon his eternal Ruin.

SER. XV. For it cannot (whatever the World thinks of it) it cannot be a Point of Honour, for a Man to *stretch out his Hand against God*, and to *strengthen himself against his Maker*. It cannot be a Piece of Cowardice to fear him; *him that is able to destroy both Body and Soul in Hell*. But to stand in Awe of the meer Opinions and Notions of Men, is truly the Sign of a *dastard Spirit*.

Let us not judge then according to the Appearance, but let us judge righteous Judgment. And let us all lay these Things to Heart, both *High and Low, Rich and Poor, one with another*. For though *Revenge* does not so often end in Blood among those of inferior Rank, or a peaceable Profession; yet do we all carry the accursed Seeds and Principles, and the cruel Instruments of *Revenge* about us. We have all a *naughty Heart* within us, that is the fruitful Womb of much Mischief. *For out of the Heart proceed evil Thoughts, and Murders*. We have a warm Heart, that (where dear blind Self is concern'd) is naturally too hasty in conceiving undue Resentments, and too fierce in pushing them into strange Excesses, and sometimes even to desperate Extremes.

Nay

Nay we have a very deceitful, dissembling Heart, that is too apt to cherish Malice privately, and *that* so finely covered over, that 'tis sometimes scarce perceived by the malicious Person himself, even when he feels it glowing in his Breast; the Warmth is so kindly and so agreeable, that the Man is wrapt up in the pleasing *Theory of Revenge*; *still* and *silent* all the while; or if he does speak, his Words are *smoother than Oil*, and yet *be they very Swords*, that will not fail, as Opportunity shall serve, to wound his Neighbour to the very Soul, in the Way of fly Address, and Insinuation, and secret Backbiting; or under the grave Pretence of wishing him well, when he means him ill, or perhaps pitying, forgiving, and praying for him, even when he is plotting his Ruin.

And although every one does not wear a *Sword* or *Dagger* by his Side, yet are we all provided of a Weapon always at Command, that is both cutting and stabbing. For we have a Tongue, and the *Psalmist* tells us (lii. 2.) that *there is a Tongue that cutteth like a sharp Razor*. *There is that speaketh like the Piercing of a Sword*, says Solomon (Prov.

xii. 18.) we have a Tongue that is too ready and too true an Interpreter of our angry Passion; and that stands *bent like a Bow* (upon every little Trespas, Offence, Neglect, or the meer Jealousy of some such Thing) *to shoot out its Arrows, even bitter Words*; and oftentimes to poison those very Arrows with deadly Venom. We have a Tongue that is at all Turns the *daring Herald to Wrath and Contention*, to provoke, to bid Defiance, to exasperate, to enrage, to give Battle, to push on furiously to the Execution sometimes of a bloody Revenge; or if bloodless, not perhaps less cruel: For it is likely enough to end in the Diffolution of the Peace of Neighbourhoods, in a Reciprocation of Reproaches and Injuries, in the Perversion of Right and Wrong; and (which though last-mentioned, is not to be reckoned among the least of Evils) in the Murder of many an innocent Person's Reputation. For there is a *Murder of the Tongue*, as well as the Hand, nay there may be a Murder without the Aid of either Hand or Tongue, For St. *John* hath plainly decided (1 *John* iii. 15.) *that whosoever hateth his Brother, is a Murderer. i. e.* even though
that

that Hatred is only harboured in the Heart, SER. XV.
and breaks not forth into any violent Attempt
upon Life; he is a Murderer in wicked Will
and Intention at least, tho' he is restrain'd by
the Fear of Man, and has not the Hardiness
to embrue his Hands in Blood.

Since therefore the *quarrelsome Principles* of
Revenge are so deep rooted in our depraved Na-
ture; and since we have Ammunition enough
always in Store for this Sort of *martial Exe-*
cution; let us not only *withhold our Hands*
from Violence, but keep a *strict Watch* upon
our Hearts, as well as a constant *Curb* upon
our Tongues: So, and so only, shall we *be*
innocent from this great Offence.

In one concluding Word, *let all Bitterness*
therefore, and Wrath, and Anger (which are
the cursed Parents of Revenge) *and Clamour,*
and evil Speaking (which are its Companions
and Abettors) *be put away from you, with*
all Malice (which is its constant Nurse) *and*
be ye kind to one another, tender-hearted, for-
giving one another, even as God for Christ's
Sake hath forgiven you, (Ephes. iv. 13, &c.)
and ye trust will finally forgive you. Which
that he may, God of his infinite Mercy grant,
in

SER.XV.in and thro' Jesus Christ our Lord ; to whom,
~~~~~ with the Father and Holy Spirit, be ascribed,  
as is due, all Praise, Glory, Might, Majesty,  
and Dominion, now, henceforth and for  
evermore. *Amen.*



## S E R M O N XVI.

The Qualifications requisite to make  
a Man compleatly good and honest.

PROVERBS iv. 25, 26, 27.

*Let thine Eyes look right on, and let  
thine Eye-lids look strait before thee.  
Ponder the Path of thy Feet, and let  
all thy Ways be established:  
Turn not to the Right Hand, nor to  
the Left; remove thy Foot from  
Evil.*

**T**HE most natural and easy Sense SERM.  
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that these Words can be resolved  
into, seems to me to be this:

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By the *Eyes* we are to understand the *Intention* or *Tendency* of the Will towards some End we have in View : And when that Text advises, *let thine Eyes look right on, and strait before thee*, it must be understood of that *Simplicity* and *Sincerity* of Intention, which aims as directly towards its proper End, as the *Archer* does to his *Mark*, or the *Traveler* to his *Stage*.

By the *Path* of our *Feet*, or our *Ways*, is meant the *Course* of a *Man's Life* and Actions, and again by *pondering* our Paths and *establishing* our Ways, that conscientious Care which is requisite in judging and trying our own Actions, and a Firmness of Resolution to keep to the right Way, and proceed constantly in it; and *that* without any Deviation, or the least warping from any Point of Duty, but with the most careful Avoidance, as also an utter Abhorrence of every thing that has so much as the Appearance of Evil, which is the Meaning of those concluding Words, *Turn not to the Right Hand, nor to the Left; remove thy Foot from Evil*.

So that we have here a most exact and adequate Rule of Life, which is in short always, and in every thing to act with *Sincerity*,  
*Circum-*



*a Man compleatly good and honest.* 449

*Circumspection, and Constancy:* Or, (if you please) we have the three Qualifications commended to us, which are *all* necessary to perfect a well-ordered and unblamable Conversation, and to make a Man compleatly good and honest. *viz.*

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*First,* A well-directed and sincere Intention.

*Secondly,* A conscientious Care and Consideration of all our Actions.

*Thirdly,* A firm Adherence to, and steady Pursuit of that which is good and virtuous.

These I shall make so many Heads of Discourse at present; and happy would it be for us all, if we could learn from Discourse to reduce them into Practice.

*First,* The first *Requisite* then to an upright and unblamable Conversation, is a *simple* and *sincere Intention*.

Now the great End of all our Actions, as we are *Creatures* capable of Virtue and Religion, is to please and honour God by obeying his holy Will, and performing our Duty towards him. This therefore ought to be

our first and most direct Intention in all that we think or do, and in every Relation, Capacity, or Condition of Life: This is the very Foundation of all conscientious Obedience, according to that of St. *Paul* to the *Hebrews* (Chap. xiii. Ver. 18.) *We trust we have a good Conscience in all Things, willing to live honestly*: It was the very Bent and Inclination of his Soul to acquit himself as he ought to do, and upon this he built his Assurance.

But where Men have no real Intention, nor hearty Desire to do their Duty, they are indeed plainly wanting to their Duty. For a good Intention, as is commonly said, is so far the Soul of a good Action, that without it it is but the *unanimated Carcass* of Virtue, and ceases to be what it is improperly and undeservedly called.

*Charity*, unless it be set on Work by the noble Motives of Love and Duty, and Gratitude towards God, is but *as sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal*, that makes Musick perhaps to a Man's Vain-Glory, or serves to refresh his Bowels when touched with natural Pity, but 'tis neither the Act nor Habit of that excellent Grace, which is *the fulfilling of the Christian Law*. And the Attendance  
upon

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upon God's Worship and Ordinances, with-  
out the serious Purpose of *doing Honour to*  
*his holy Name, and reverencing his Sanctuary,*  
*and serving him with all Humility,* (though  
it makes a specious Shew, and has the out-  
ward Form of Godliness, yet it has nothing  
of its Power or Spirit; it is rather an Act of  
Prophanation, than Religion.

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It appears therefore, that without a direct  
Reference to God, and an unfeigned Intenti-  
on to obey and honour him, there can in  
Truth be no such Thing as Virtue or Godli-  
ness. But then this Intention may be either  
such as is *actual* and *express*, or *habitual* and  
*imply'd*. For Instance, the Apostle's Rule is,  
*whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do,*  
*to do all to the Glory of God* (1 Cor. x. 31.)  
And if any Man, that in Time past has been  
no Observer of this Rule, should resolve for  
the future to govern himself by the strictest  
Measures of Temperance in eating and drink-  
ing, this his Resolution must be accompanied  
with an *actual* and *formal Intention* of obey-  
ing and glorifying God by so doing; and this  
is necessary to make his intended Temperance  
an acceptable Virtue. But now, he that with  
the same View has long accustomed himself

*The Qualifications requisite to make*

to live soberly and abstinently, although he should *not formally* design in every particular Meal to give Glory to God by the sober Use of his Creatures, yet he does it *effectually*, because he is *habitually* sober, he is so by *virtuous Inclination*; which commencing upon a right Principle at first, and being confirmed by constant Custom, need not be directed upon *every single* Act by an *immediate Intuition* to the End which it never fails to aim at. But however, an Intention to honour God, either *actual* or *habitual*, is always an essential Ingredient in our virtuous Obedience.

And the Sincerity of this Intention implies not only a Freedom from all Dissimulation or Feigning, but also from all Mixture of any baser Ends or Interests whatsoever. For if we really intend to serve God, we must not so much as think of serving our own Lusts at the same Time, nor must we serve ourselves of any Advantage beyond what he allows, or farther forth than he has designed or proposed it for an Encouragement to our Obedience.

The *Magistrate* that punishes an Offender must remember whose Judgment it is he executes, and not suffer the Desire of Revenge to mingle with his Zeal for Justice.

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The *Minister* too must act with Regard to his Commission, and when he *preaches Christ* SERM.  
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*Jesus the Lord*, he must not dare to *preach him out of Envy* and Contention, which, as the Apostle says, is *not sincerely* (*Phil. i. 15, 16.*) nor must he presume to preach himself, his own darling Notions or time-serving Opinions, *but by the Manifestation of the Truth* (and that only) *he must commend himself to every Man's Conscience in the Sight of God*, (*2 Cor. iv. 2.*) And though a Man ought to be industrious in his Calling, in order to provide for his Family (which is the End that God and Nature set directly in his View) yet he ought not to adulterate so laudable a Design with the Hopes of *making Provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof* out of his Superfluities. And in these and all other Cases, since *there is no Fellowship between Righteousness and Unrighteousness*, since *there can be no Concord between Christ and Belial*, an Intention of serving both in one and the same Action can't consist with itself, but it must alter the Quality of the whole Action, and render it, however seemingly virtuous, really vicious.

But though the least Alloy of Evil in the Intention must necessarily viciate the whole Action, yet it is not so absolutely necessary, in order to preserve the Intention uncorrupt, that it should bear no kind of Regard to any subordinate End, but only to the chief and ultimate one of pleasing and honouring God in all our Actions. For a Respect to a subordinate End, if kept within due Subordination, and not suffered to juggle out the *Principal*, may be both lawful and useful.

This is certain and unquestionable, that God has made our Nature such as is liable to be wrought upon by inferior Motives, and such as lie upon the Level with our present State and Condition; and pursuant to this, he hath annexed certain natural Rewards and Punishments to the Practice of Virtue and Vice; which he hath also farther enforced by promising the Blessings of his Providence to the one, and threatening his Curses upon the other; and the best Men in all Ages have been influenced by these Considerations, and yet have had their Obedience approved and accepted of God.

These therefore must be allowed to be additional Spurs to Virtue, but not the first Movers

Movers and earnest Directors of our virtuous Intention; the Spring of that Motion must be from above. It is doubtless a Thing rationally eligible to be chaste and temperate, because 'tis for our Health and Reputation, and rightly understood, for our Pleasure too; it is as desirable to be humble and peaceable, because 'tis for our Ease and Tranquillity; and to be diligent and frugal, because 'tis for our Profit and Convenience; and it must be allowable to embrace these and the like Virtues, not without an Eye even to these kind of Reasons: But then the *determining*, the *governing* Reason must be, because God has so commanded, and it is our bounden Duty to render him the Honour of an unreserved Obedience.

And the Sincerity of the Intention can't well be maintained without the superior Influence of this governing Reason. For a Man may possibly contrive to be a sly and wary *Debauchee*, without forfeiting his Health or Reputation; and Humility and Peaceableness do sometimes meet with very unfair Returns and unkind Entertainment; and Diligence and Frugality are not always attended with Prosperity. In short, it may, and does

happen in many Instances, that the Disadvantage is plainly on the Side of Virtue, and all the Profit cast into the other Scale: And when this proves to be the Case, he that has no further or higher Aim than some temporal Advantage or Convenience, he that has not a principal Respect to the Commandments of God accompanied with an humble Sense of his own Duty, will find that he acts upon a lame Principle that will hardly be sufficient to carry him thorough; he will find himself under a strong Temptation to turn aside from the rugged Path of Virtue, and to follow the Way of the World, which is more easy and commodious.

Upon the whole therefore it is too clear to be disputed, that a single and sincere Intention to honour God by obeying him is the very Foundation Stone of all Virtue and Religion, and the first necessary Requisite towards making up the Character of a compleat honest and religious Man.

*Secondly*, But the second is like unto it, and ought to be inseparable from it; viz. a conscientious Care and Consideration of all our Actions.

And



And the first Part of our Care must be to SERM.  
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inform our selves rightly and fully of our Duty; and this follows naturally after a sincere Intention to perform it. For if we do really intend to do our Duty, we must, in order to that End, both desire and endeavour to learn it. And as it ought to be the chief Scope of our Actions to honour God, by obeying him, so his Will ought to be the Standard of our Obedience. And since he hath pleased to make a clear Revelation and Publication of his Will, *to be a Light to our Feet, and a Lanthorn to our Paths*, to be both an unerring Rule, and a perpetual Law to us, we are certainly under the strictest Obligation to apply this Rule and study this Law, *to search the Scriptures*, that we may prove and understand what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect Will of God, by which we ought to square and regulate all our Actions.

For the Promulgation of a Law must in course oblige all that are subject to that Law, to make themselves acquainted with the Purport thereof, that they may be in a Readiness to obey it; otherwise it would be vain and foolish to enact it. And the careless or neglectful Ignorance of a Law that lies open to  
4 View,

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SERM. View, and is easy to be understood, and  
XVI. ought to be obeyed, is itself an Act of wilful Disobedience.

And consequently we cannot be innocently ignorant of our Duty (which is so plainly taught us in Scripture, *by Line upon Line, and Precept upon Precept*) whilst we are negligently and wilfully so. Nor is such a culpable Ignorance as this consistent indeed with a sincere Intention of performing any conscientious Obedience.

For how can that Man be thought to be willing to live honestly in all Things, that neither knows nor cares what Honesty means? How can it be imagined, that *he* has any fixed Purpose of doing his Duty, who will not be at the Pains so much as to enquire after it?

Besides, if we could suppose such a Man's Intention to be really good, yet it must of Necessity be insufficient to produce the Effect intended. For he that most sincerely intends to discharge his Duty, may possibly, through Inconsideration, unhappily mistake it, and fall short of it in Practice; but he that will not trouble himself to get any Information about it, *that* Man confessedly acts by no Rule at all,

all, but lives a lawless kind of Life; or if any of his Actions should chance to be conformable to the Law of God, the Virtue and Commendation of them is quite lost, because they proceed not from an obedient Disposition of Heart.

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It must therefore be a main Point of Duty, even to be well informed of our Duty, and to understand the Rule whereby we are to walk, that so it may be of real Use to us in the Conduct of our Lives, and always at Hand to be applied to Practice.

2<sup>dly</sup>, And this ought to be our next Care, to apply it impartially to Practice, and to bring our Actions particularly, as often as need is, to the *Touch-stone* of God's Word, that it may appear whether they are such as will answer to the Trial. And this we cannot omit to do, unless we would render the Scripture useless, and turn Conscience out of Office.

For a Rule is of no Use at all, unless it be applied to that of which it is to be the Measure; and if the Scripture be a Rule of Life to us, we ought to consult it upon all Occasions, and to regulate our Lives by it. And the very Office of Conscience is to make a practical Judgment of the Lawfulness or Un-

lawfulness

lawfulness of any Action, by its Conformity or Disconformity to the Word and Will of God; and according as it is found upon the Comparifon, to receive or to reject it with Abhorrence.

This was Saint *Paul's* Management of himself, and ought to be every honest Man's Pattern: He was willing, he had a Desire in *all Things to live honestly*: And upon this Ground he trusted he had a good Conscience, but yet he did not depend upon this good Intention or Inclination alone, without putting it upon the practical Proof: For he elfewhere professes, *that herein he exercised himself to have always a Conscience void of Offence toward God and toward Men.* (Acts xxiv. 16.) As the Law of God had been his Study, so it was his constant Exercise to make it familiar and useful to himself in his whole Practice.

And that Conscience itself may not err or stumble under so safe a Guidance, there is a two-fold Caution necessary, the one in interpreting the Scripture, that is the Rule, and the other in representing the Action that is to be measured by it.

In interpreting the Scripture, we must be sure to proceed impartially, and take our Duty  
just



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just as we find it, and explain it in the most natural and obvious Sense, however strictly it may bind us up: We must not presume to distinguish away, alter, or mollify any of God's Commandments, or to bend it to any prevailing Fashion or Custom, or any Opinion that is in Vogue and Countenance, or that may prove profitable. For by so doing we shall perversly warp the sacred Rule itself, and make it an untrue or an uncertain Measure, and so wilfully deviate into irregular Practices, and confirm our selves in them by the pretended Warrant of Scripture.

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Again, in representing any Action that is to be tried by Scripture, we must proceed with the like Impartiality; we must be sure to set it forth in its true Quality, and in its proper Circumstances; we must not lay on specious Colours to conceal or palliate any real Defects, we must not, because it would be for our Interest or Credit to have it found conformable to the Rule, be willing to take it for granted, that it is so, for fear it should not bear the Test of a rigid Examination: For by using such collusive Methods as these, we shall in Effect hood-wink our own Consciences, that they may not discover the Errors  
of

SERM. of our Ways, and wilfully deceive ourselves,  
XVI. to our own Destruction.

Take an Instance pertinent to what has been said upon this Article, in the Case of *Schism*, which is ranked (we know) in Scripture with Sins of the deepest Die: And therefore to make so light of it, as the Manner of some is, is notoriously to misinterpret Scripture, and to make no Account of that neither. On the other Hand, to say, that the causeless Breach of Church-Communion is not the Schism condemned in Scripture (altho' it be the most aggravated Sort of *Schism*) is to cover over a grievous Sin with a thin Pretence, that is not to be justified from Scripture or Reason.

In sum, if we would be faithful to our Souls, if we would have a good Conscience, and keep it, both our Interpretation of Scripture, and the Representation of our own Actions, when compared with Scripture, must be void of all Partiality and corrupt Biass. And whosoever is thus true to himself, so strict an Examiner of his own Conduct, and so impartially obedient to God's holy Word, he takes the directest Way to his End, he crowns his good Intentions with a suitable Practice,

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Practice, and makes the second considerable SERM.  
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Advance towards acquiring the Character of  
an entire honest Man, which wants only to  
be finished,

*Thirdly*, in the last Place, by a firm Adherence to, and a constant Pursuit of that which is good and virtuous. And there is a clear and necessary Connexion between this and the two foregoing Qualifications. For if we sincerely intend and desire to glorify God by obeying his holy Will, and if with that Purpose we carefully consult his Will, and conscientiously endeavour to conform ourselves thereunto, this deliberate Choice, once made, will convince us, that we are obliged to adhere to the same (because otherwise we shall undo all that we have done) and perpetually to cleave to that which is good, and eschew and abhor that which is evil.

And this Firmness and Steadiness is rightly founded upon a careful and conscientious Examination of our Actions, because without such a practical Judgment preceding, if we should happen to do what 'tis our Duty to do, it would be but a blind Obedience; and if we should resolve to hold firmly to it, it would

would then be but a fortunate Obstinacy. But when upon the strictest and most impartial Survey, we cannot but judge our selves to be in the right Way, as it would be unpardonable Levity rashly or hastily to depart from it, so it is a virtuous and commendable Constancy to persevere unalterably in it. It is a Testimony to the World, that the Sense of our known Duty, and the Approbation of God and our own Consciences, have more Weight with us than any other Consideration whatsoever.

And so much the more commendable is this Constancy and Perseverance, by how much the more shameful it would be to make a Revolt from Virtue, after we have chosen to serve under its Banner; which is to sin directly against Knowledge, to defeat and evacuate all our good Purposes, to revoke our best formed Judgments, and to violate and lay waste our Consciences.

But that which crowns this Stedfastness of Resolution with the highest Commendation, is to see it conflicting with all kind of Disadvantages and Difficulties, attended with Loss of Favour, Friendship, Ease, Honour, or Profit, exposed to heavy Censure, and Shame,  
and



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and Reproach, undeservedly, and persecuted with the utmost Malice, Indignity and Violence; and yet unshaken. For that Virtue must needs be of the purest and the solidest Sort, that is thus tried as it were in the refining Pot, and can abide the Fire; it is an evident Token that that Judgment of Conscience was deliberately framed and surely grounded, that is not to be altered by any Change of Circumstances; it is a demonstrable Proof, that the Intention was originally and immovably fixed upon pleasing and honouring God above all Things, when it is not to be wrought upon or diverted by any lower Motive, whether of Allurement or Terror.

And now we have joined all the Qualifications together, which make up the consummate Character of an upright and a perfect Man; viz. a sincere Intention dedicated to God's Service, and directed to his Glory; a careful and conscionable Practice, every Way answerable to such an Intention; and a resolved Perseverance that will endure any Trial.

This is the Man *whose Eyes look right on, and his Eye-lids strait before him: This is he who pondereth the Path of his Feet, and all whose Ways are established:* This is he who

SERM. *turneth not to the Right Hand nor to the Left,*  
 XVI. *but removeth his Foot from Evil.*

Which great and amiable Character let us all religiously and zealously imitate, and by a patient and steddy Continuance in well-doing, *inherit Glory, and Honour, and Immortality in the World to come, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed, as is due, all Praise, Glory, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, now, henceforth, and for evermore. Amen.*

*The End of the SIXTH VOLUME.*



# ERRATA.

**PAGE** 10. Line 6. read 2 *Cor.* p. 12. l. 3. r. *Power.* p. 46. l. 24. r. *owe to God.* p. 47. l. 23. r. *neither.* p. 49. l. 6. r. *then.* lb. l. 12. add *they.* p. 50. l. 24. for 17. r. 1. p. 52. l. 24. r. *long.* p. 69. l. 18. del. *but.* p. 102. l. 3. r. *give.* l. penult r. *Judgment.* p. 108. l. 8. r. *their.* l. 16. r. *confirm.* p. 174. l. 12. r. *one.* l. 24. after *Tradition,* r. ). p. 178. l. 19. after *Master,* put a . p. 191. l. 16. r. *Revelation.* p. 202. l. 5. add *the.* p. 206. l. 2. d. 2dly. p. 216. l. 5. r. *relying.* p. 224. l. 24. r. *in time.* p. 256. l. 15. r. *awakening.* p. 257. l. 9. add *for good.* p. 277. l. 12. d. *that.* p. 288. l. 2. r. *conceives.* p. 296. l. 5. r. *carking.* p. 349. l. 13. r. 14. p. 353. l. 22. for 17. r. *one.* p. 366. after *Strength* r. ). p. 379. l. 16. r. *God's.* p. 389. l. 18. r. *regard.* p. 392. l. ult. r. 6. p. 399. l. 6. r. *that.* l. 15. add *the.* l. 21. *Imagination.* p. 408. l. 19. r. *delightful.* p. 424. l. 10. r. and. p. 427. l. 12. r. *Ecclesiasticus.* p. 445. l. 24. r. 31.





